NEA Today
September 1997
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Special Edition for
Educational Support Personnel

Getting Organized

How support staff and teachers in one district are working for kids.

See page 2

nea
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

President's Message

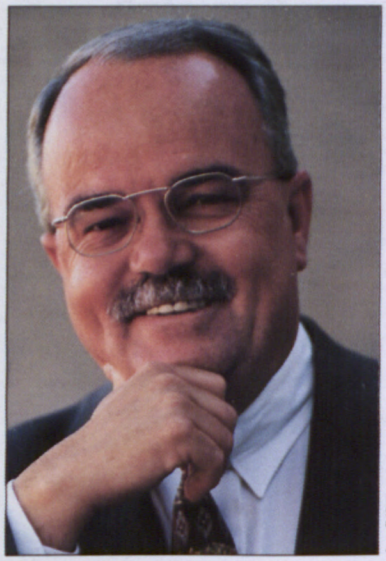
Organize!

Many Americans no longer see public schools as their schools. Poll after poll—by different researchers using different methods and investigating different sections of the country—tells us that the historic compact between the public and public schools is in danger of dissolving.

If allowed to continue, this distancing of the public from its schools will threaten the very survival of public education as an institution in our society. It will leave our schools totally exposed to the predators—the private contractors of school services, the school management companies, and those who would use public money to fund private schools.

What can be done to reconnect our communities with our public schools?

There are many things. None is more important, however, than empowering educational support personnel.



Joe DiDio

NEA President Bob Chase

ESPs are more likely than teachers to live in the community where they work. They are more likely to hold second jobs in the community. They are more likely to shop in the community's supermarkets on Saturday and attend the community's churches on Sunday. They're also more likely to reflect the racial and ethnic make-up of the students and the community.

ESPs are, in other words, a tremendous resource for reconnecting schools and communities—but an undervalued and underutilized one.

Why undervalued and underutilized? Because ESPs are under-organized.

You empower people by organizing them. That is the first and foremost principle of unionism. Even though NEA's ESP membership is growing steadily—it now tops 265,000—we have to do a better job of organizing ESPs.

Three of every four public school teachers in America belong to a union—either NEA or AFT. That is because the teachers did some serious organizing in the 1960s and 1970s.

By contrast, only one of every four educational support employees belongs to a union. There are at least two million unorganized ESPs!

Fortunately, we have within our ranks some wonderful member-organizers. People like Carter Foshee, an electrician in Oklahoma's Edmond School District, who helped organize the ESPs, wall to wall, in another district (Broken Bow). People like NEA Support Person of the Year Karen Mahurin, a school secretary, who has used a dog sled to reach Alaska ESPs and organize them.

Our very first NEA Support Person of the Year, Peggy Bertollo, a school bus driver from Newcastle, Delaware, was a great member-organizer. We lost Peggy to cancer several years ago, but her words still ring in our ears: "You have to understand that when you're out there organizing, you're making the world better not just for yourself but for every worker who follows in your footsteps, every child who gets on a bus, steps into a classroom, or enters a cafeteria."

I can only add that when you are out there organizing, you're laying the very foundation for public education's future. ESPs do see public schools as their schools, and if anyone can strengthen the relationship between schools and communities, educational support staff can.

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Getting Organized

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Getting Organized We're All

When Central Elementary School secretary Peg Earl had the idea to launch a celebration of Chinese culture, teachers, principals, and support staff across Michigan's Reeths-Puffer district jumped right on board.

Everyone pitched in to bring the sights, sounds, and tastes of China to the schools.

"It was my idea, but without the music and art teachers and the classroom teachers, we couldn't have done it," says Earl, who is president of her NEA local's secretarial and paraprofessional unit.

Such cooperation between teachers and support personnel is business as usual in this district.

Teachers and support staff bargain together, hold joint retirement dinners, and attend professional development workshops together.

According to bus driver Peggy Watkins, mutual respect and a "shared objective"—student welfare—are the real binding agents.

Staff cooperation shows up in many ways.

Peggy Watkins

Teachers give custodians and bus drivers a heads-up on classroom parties so that extra trash bags can be at the ready.

And each June, bus drivers donate their time to take new graduates to a nearby college gym, where teachers chaperone a night of dancing until the drivers take the weary revelers home.

In this Michigan district, support staff and teachers collaborate to serve students and promote their schools. What makes it all work is mutual respect and a shared objective: the kids.

Teachers also enlist support staff as classroom resources.

For instance, Watkins—who as a kindergartner was one of the district's first African-American students—visited classes during Black History Month to share her experiences.

A Bit of Advice

What can you do in *your* school district to promote such staff unity?

Watkins, a member of the Michigan Education Association's governing board, recommends:

- **A pitch-in attitude.** "We all do things that aren't in our job descriptions because that's what makes our school-world family tick."
- **Support staff need to understand that they are just as important as everyone else.** "Formerly, when Reeths-Puffer support personnel read a notice addressed to 'staff,' they

In This Together

When high schoolers graduate in Michigan's Reeths-Puffer district, teachers chaperone their post-graduation party and bus drivers ferry revelers home at 5 a.m.—free of charge. That's just one way these staffers collaborate to make a difference in students' lives.

thought it was for teachers only. Now they know that it means them, too."

- **Open communication.** "We talk, listen, and work toward a common goal—our students."
- **R-E-S-P-E-C-T** "We have to respect one another, because we *need* each other," Watkins concludes.

Erik Holladay

Peggy Earl

Organizing for Quality

A Safer Plac

In close collaboration with their NEA state affiliate, teacher and school support staff locals in Ashtabula, Ohio launched a campaign this spring to make their schools safer places to teach and learn.

The two locals surveyed school employees and the community on safety needs and concerns, and are now compiling their findings.

The goal: devise a plan to improve school safety—and, with it, the quality of education.

The Association survey is an "attempt to change the school environment so the potential of violence isn't there," says Arlene Boal, a secretary at the Windermere Building.

Besides addressing disorder, the survey touches on other safety issues, like employee first aid and CPR training.

"We wanted to pull in *all* factors of a safe school environment," Boal says.

"If you feel safe and secure," adds Chris Seuffert, a health and physical education teacher at Harbor High, "you teach a lot differently than if you feel you have to be constantly on guard."

In Ashtabula Area City Schools—an inner-city district set in a rural area—safety concerns range from students carrying guns into school to unguarded building entrances.

Other danger signs: an increase in expulsions and suspensions, plus more fights in school.

All this and more led members of the Ashtabula Area Teachers' Association and the Ashtabula Association of Classified School Employees to design a safety questionnaire for more than 200 people.

Respondents included everyone from administrators to guidance counselors and crossing guards to parents and students. The respondents are all volunteers, whose willingness to participate strengthens the responses, Boal emphasizes.

Carl Feather

Secretary Arlene Boal, above, is working with teacher Chris Seuffert to make Ashtabula schools safer for everybody.

"We decided we have to take action somehow," she explains. "The survey response was encouraging—people just want some action taken.

"Even kids," Boal sums up, "were saying that if they were there to get an education, they needed to feel safe."

ce to Learn

New Standard for Parent Involvement

Joe DiDio

Megan Link, left, and Barbara Sieber stress constant contact with parents.

Working together, the Culpeper County (Virginia) Education Association and school district recently offered free dinner and child care to entice parents and other community residents to a discussion about the state's new Standards of Learning.

The standards, implemented last year, include tough academic tests at grades 3, 5, 8, and 11—a change that has been controversial.

"We wanted to provide a way for parents to feel more comfortable with and be aware of the new, more rigorous standards, and how they will affect their children's education," says teacher Laurel Booth, who headed the committee that organized the event.

More than 350 adults attended the spaghetti dinner, a turnout that surprised and encouraged Megan Link, a library clerk at Sycamore Park Elementary School.

"We anticipated that we'd have parents who were interested and concerned, but we didn't realize the full extent of their concern," says Link, a local Association officer.

Barbara Sieber, a special education instructional assistant at Sycamore Park and a member of Booth's committee, says providing an easy way for parents to participate in the program helped stimulate their involvement.

But *sustaining* parents' concern about the quality of their children's education takes continued effort.

"Indicate the need for involvement at every opportunity," Link advises. "Call parents, interact with them face-to-face. Communicate what a positive reinforcement it is for a child to see a parent in the building."

Such persistence will benefit a child's education "100 percent," Sieber adds. "Parents who really care about the education of their children realize it's an advantage for the parents to be educated."

An Equal Voice For Support Staff

In Wyoming, Michigan, support employees sit on school-based improvement councils with other educators, meeting weekly to make joint decisions about budget, personnel, and other important issues.

Better yet: Support staff—along with teachers, administrators, and parents—have an equal voice on these committees.

Wyoming Educational Support Staff Association President Gary Vanderveen says trust and teamwork make this collaboration possible.

"Most importantly, we have the trust of the administration, parents, and teachers," he says. "It's a relationship that has built up over the years. On these committees, everyone pretty much feels important."

Eliminating the "top-down" approach has allowed support staff to obtain an equal voice on the committees, explains Vanderveen, head custodian at Oriole Park Elementary. "We're close with the school board, and we work in a friendly, safe, caring environment."

And open communication facilitates a good working relationship and mutual respect, he adds.

"Talking freely about any issue that comes up is crucial for trust. We nip any problem in the bud," Vanderveen points out.

"My advice to support staff in other districts," he says, "is to be involved in the schools and show your interest."

Organizing the Unorganized

A Place On

What do you do when you haven't had a raise in four years, your seniority counts for nothing, and no one is listening to you?

Faced with this dilemma, 64 school support employees in rural Broken Bow, Oklahoma have organized. They now join more than 265,700 support staff across the country who belong to NEA.

In January, the Broken Bow workers—including secretaries, food service employees, maintenance workers, and custodians—formed their own NEA local affiliate, the Broken Bow Education Support Personnel Association.

Then, in a secret ballot election in May—jointly conducted by the school board and Oklahoma Education Association—these employees voted overwhelmingly for Association representation at the bargaining table.

Support staff in Broken Bow, Oklahoma just want to be heard. They've found their voice through NEA.

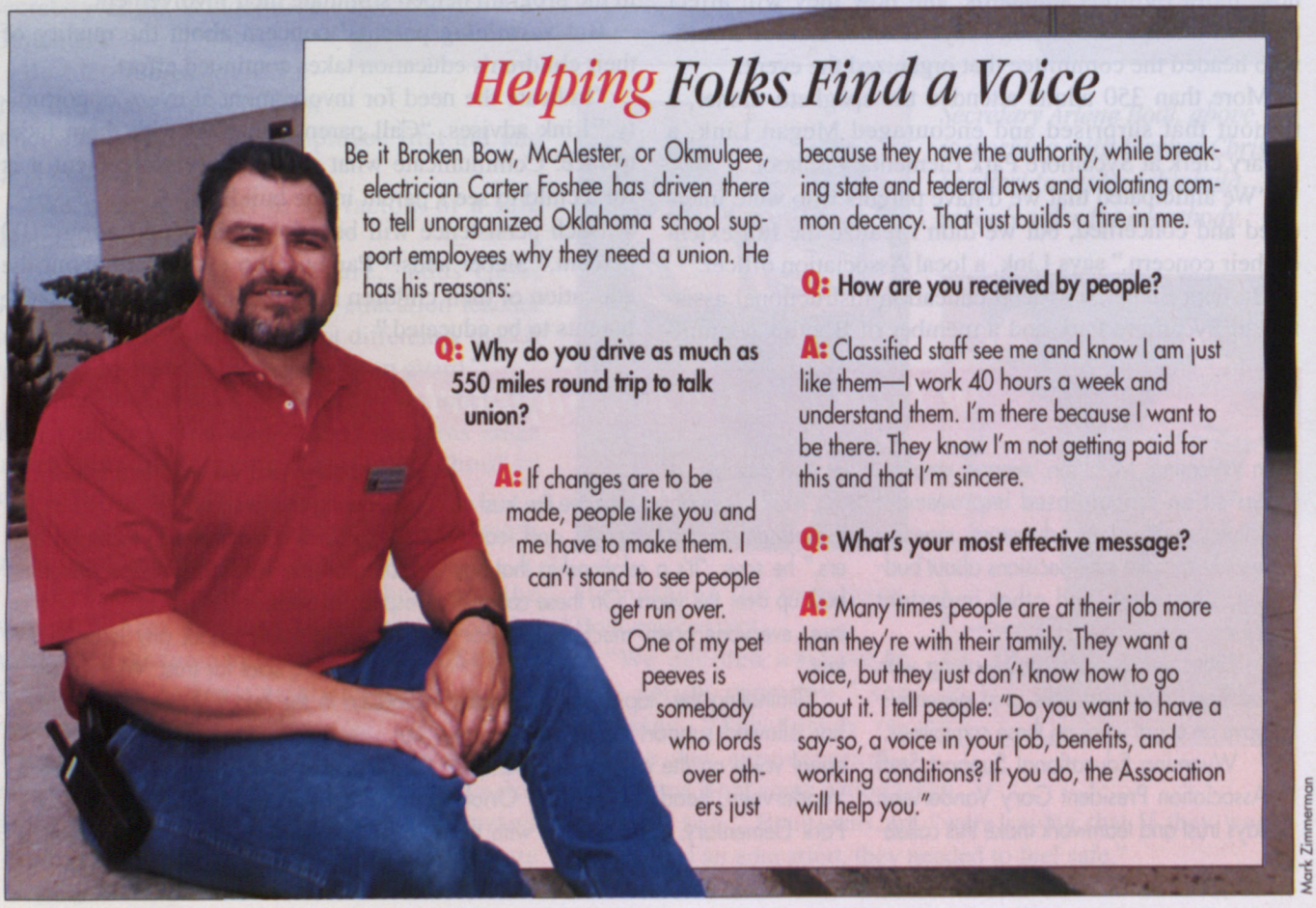
This victory capped an organizing process that began last year when "some of us got together and started talking," says bus driver and local president Mary Hudson. "We just wanted to be recognized, and went from there."

Hudson, who did a "lot of talking and running" on behalf of co-workers, first researched the Association by talking to the NEA local president and superintendent in the nearby Valliant district. Pleased with what she heard, this activist started to circulate Association representation petitions at every Broken Bow worksite.

But there were still questions to be answered.

During informational meetings with Oklahoma Education Association staff and Carter Foshee, an ESP member on the OEA governing board, the Broken Bow workers got a crash course in collective bargaining.

Foshee, an electrician in the Edmond district, spoke about "strength through numbers" and what his 150-member local has



Helping Folks Find a Voice

Be it Broken Bow, McAlester, or Okmulgee, electrician Carter Foshee has driven there to tell unorganized Oklahoma school support employees why they need a union. He has his reasons:

Q: Why do you drive as much as 550 miles round trip to talk union?

A: If changes are to be made, people like you and me have to make them. I can't stand to see people get run over. One of my pet peeves is somebody who lords over others just because they have the authority, while breaking state and federal laws and violating common decency. That just builds a fire in me.

Q: How are you received by people?

A: Classified staff see me and know I am just like them—I work 40 hours a week and understand them. I'm there because I want to be there. They know I'm not getting paid for this and that I'm sincere.

Q: What's your most effective message?

A: Many times people are at their job more than they're with their family. They want a voice, but they just don't know how to go about it. I tell people: "Do you want to have a say-so, a voice in your job, benefits, and working conditions? If you do, the Association will help you."

Mark Zimmerman

the Team

achieved through bargaining—including a printed salary scale with guaranteed pay increases.

The Association speakers stressed that bargaining "isn't a 100 percent cure-all, that Broken Bow employees have to work at it," Foshee recalls. But he could see that these newcomers have what it takes.

"What struck me," Foshee adds, "is that these are very dedicated, loyal, and hard working people who want a voice and to put something down on paper—so that classified people and administrators can work together."

Gary Lawson

"We just wanted to be recognized, and went from there," says driver Mary Hudson.

Tackling the Issues

Now that the Broken Bow school board has certified the Association election results and hired a negotiator, these new NEA members are making themselves heard.

A survey of bargaining issues reveals, among other things: rock-bottom pay (less than $8,000 for food service employees), huge employee co-pays for health insurance premiums, and a need for equitable treatment in pay and promotion.

"The district has been challenged by the ESP organizing effort," observes Mary Hudson. "As with any new labor-management situation, some people have concerns and misconceptions, while others just want to ignore the problems."

There's clearly some educating to do as the Association prepares to bargain its first contract. But Hudson, with the help of local Vice President Linda Smith, Secretary Sherry Matthews, and OEA staff, is ready for the challenge.

"We need to unravel some of this stuff, and in so doing realize that we can all work together to address the issues and concerns of our local members," Hudson notes.

"In this ball game, you need a coach, a team, and cooperation," she says. "Support staff need to be recognized as part of the team."

Nevada Growth Formula

In Nevada, the Nye County Support Staff Organization has expanded from 12 school bus drivers in 1992 to 123 members today—including office staff, custodians, and paraprofessionals. Local President Dale Blake, a bus driver, signs up new members by:

- **Proving to people why they need to be organized**, like citing a problem that was fixed by the Association and "showing what we prevented from happening." The message: "Join us, and we can collectively do even *more*."
- **Watching for administration mistakes.** "The more they screw up—like showing favoritism or attempting to contract out work—the more people need representation," says Blake.
- **Aiming at goals that will benefit everybody,** like better pay, job security, or transfer rights. By negotiating a requirement that new jobs be offered first to "bargaining unit" members, the local has made membership a gateway to advancement.
- **Inviting non-members to monthly local meetings,** at which officers focus discussion on a single hot topic.
- **Turning members into organizers.** "I urge as many people as possible to sign up non-members," concludes Blake.

Organizing for Our Rights

Bargaining

Kentucky may not have a collective bargaining law for education employees, but that doesn't stop Magoffin County school support staff from negotiating contract improvements for *everybody.*

These members of the Kentucky Educational Support Personnel Association (KESPA) just approach bargaining a little differently—one person at a time, yet collectively.

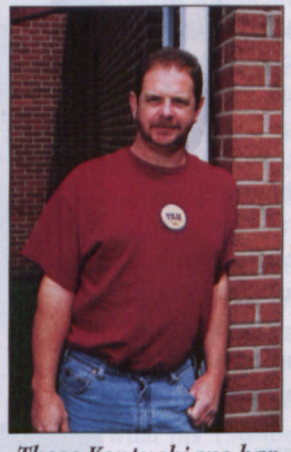
"Just because you don't have a law on the state books doesn't mean you don't have any say on your contract," maintains Magoffin County KESPA Co-President Johnetta Whitaker. "We've been able to win changes in everything from due process to sick days."

The Magoffin bargaining drive actually began as part of an overall organizing strategy.

"When we started out early last year, there were only 11 members in the local and there was little active participation," notes Whitaker, a family resource coordinator at the John T. Arnett Family Resource Center in Gunlock.

"A few of us attended a KESPA workshop and met with Dwight Blake, the local UniServ director," she recalls. "He said he'd be able to help us with our contract, but KESPA would be even more effective if we represented at least half of the school personnel in the district."

"We decided to accept Dwight's challenge," adds Sandy Howard, a kindergarten aide and veteran KESPA member. "We began a recruitment campaign last year, telling potential members that we had the right to stand up before the school board about our contracts—and that if we did so in greater numbers we'd be more effective."



These Kentuckians bargain contracts one at a time—yet collectively.

Support staff had an added incentive when they saw how Association leaders attended every school board meeting where contract issues were discussed, and successfully argued for improvements and against cuts.

"We knew that we couldn't do a single bargaining unit contract," Whitaker says, "but we'd still be able to represent the interests of everyone by making each employee agreement

Five Ways to Win Justice

Tom Greenleaf, grievance chair of the Neshaminy (Pennsylvania) Educational Support Personnel Association, has won grievances on everything from arbitrary discipline to "sick building" illness. And he knows *why.*

Success begins with a strong contract, this custodian stresses, "particularly on issues like sick building problems. Make sure your contract language is clear and strong."

To best handle grievances, Greenleaf advises:

1. "Research, research, research. In Pennsylvania, our state Association has a resource center where we can look up labor laws, contract language, you name it. It's invaluable when you want to make your case.

2. "Be clear about whether a member's complaint is a grievance, a problem that can be resolved by approaching management, or an issue that requires more serious attention.

3. "Local knowledge is power. We may use regional Association staff to assist in grievances from time to time, but we really use them as consultants because they may not know the nuances of our situation.

4. "Training is key. You can't argue cases well without the skills. Every year, we send leaders to the Association's state academy.

5. "Finally, communicate with your members. It's essential, even if it's just an updated newsletter showing pending grievances."

Tom Greenleaf wins grieva

One-By-One

a 'cookie-cutter' contract, each with the same language."

The standard contract won by the local included gains in areas such as due process, job classification, and reductions in force. "We also gained insurance options for our members," Whitaker boasts. "Bargaining took six months, but the board was able to come up with a contract agreeable to everyone."

In addition to pushing for improvements, Magoffin support staff had to fight to protect what was rightfully theirs.

J. Breck Smither

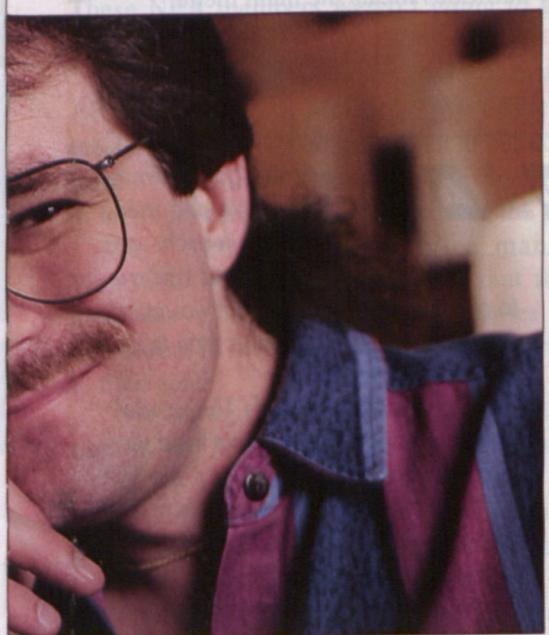
"When the board tried to cut our 10 sick days to three days, we were out in force," Whitaker says. "And when they discussed due process, we made sure our members were there to make statements."

"We wouldn't back down from our points and the board listened," adds Whitaker's co-president, maintenance supervisor Billy Jenkins Sr.

"If we hadn't been at the board meeting during the sick-day discussion, we would have lost those days," he stresses.

Employees appreciate this kind of advocacy. Magoffin KESPA membership quickly rose to more than 125.

The lesson, says Whitaker, is "Organize for your job and organize for your rights. There isn't a wall keeping you out."



John Whitehead

nces. And he's even willing to tell you how.

Feeling Something Comin' On

Last spring, food service workers in Greenville, Mississippi were fed up.

They hadn't received a raise for two years. They faced a loss in pay because Workfare participants were being given some of their hours. And they heard rumors of subcontracting.

But the superintendent and school board refused to meet with them over these and other concerns.

But instead of giving up, these NEA members organized a March sickout that shut down 13 of the district's 16 school cafeterias for two days. That got attention—and results.

After 48 hours of trying to feed students with fast food, administrators gained a new appreciation of the cafeteria staff. Two days after the sick-out ended, they met with the Greenville Association of Educators.

Association members Eric Powell and Richlon Webster were well prepped to present the workers' case, thanks to pre-meeting strategy sessions with NEA organizers. "The rest is history," says Webster.

"The district decided not to place Workfare employees in our kitchens, we're not being subcontracted, and the board has agreed to interest-based bargaining," he reports. And in June, the school board voted a 3 percent pay raise for these workers.

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Educational Support Personnel and Teachers

We can all stand apart, or...

We can all st

Listen and Learn.

"When support personnel and teachers work together to ensure the continuity of quality learning, there is always somebody who cares about the child—for instance, the custodian who recognizes a child from his neighborhood and the cafeteria worker who recognizes that the child is not eating properly. It's important to collaborate with the classroom teacher to determine what is best for the child."

Linda Garrett,
proctor for community/education relations,
Alabama State University

Work As a Team.

"We foster the concept that it takes an entire team to educate a child. Support personnel are included in both 'faculty' meetings and in-service professional development. A classroom aide needs an idea of the teaching concepts being used and what assistance he or she can offer."

Carolyn Duff,
office automation aide,
Ft. Knox High School, Kentucky

"In my county, teachers and teacher assistants planned a series of 10 two-hour workshops—for all classroom employees—on how to plan and work together for the benefit of the kids. It's very important for students to see assistants and teachers getting along."

Barbara Highsmith,
teacher assistant,
Gregory School of Science, Math, & Technology,
Wilmington, North Carolina

Show Some Respect.

"Respect yourself and you will get respect in return—it will come across from everyone."

Sharon Carelli,
career center technician,
Pioneer High School,
Redding, California

"We and teachers have respect for each other. We helped elect pro-education people to our school board. That helped us stay united."

Marjorie Howell,
special education teacher assistant,
South Penn Elementary,
Allegany County, Maryland

and together!

Bargain as One.

"Since we share goals—like better working conditions and workplace safety—my local and the certified local work as a team. We pool our resources and stay in contact, even when both locals are negotiating. Often support people can obtain information—like budget data—that the certified can't get, and in turn, the certified can get information that we don't have access to."

Carter Foshee,
electrician,
Edmond Public School District #12,
Oklahoma

"We bargain together with our teachers at different tables, but one member from each unit sits and makes comments at the other unit's table. Nobody settles until we all settle."

Tim Smith,
head custodian,
Levey Middle School,
Southfield, Michigan

Unite Against Subcontracting.

"Because support staff often live in the school district and are parents there, we are community stakeholders. We must educate the public that private companies, unlike teachers and support staff, don't put in the time with kids over and above their normal school day activities. Privatization is there for profit—we are there for the children."

David Hockaday,
paraprofessional,
Lansing (Michigan)
School District

Make This Everyone's Association.

"In my local Association newsletter we make an effort to include articles in every issue about the concerns and issues of support staff people—like privatization."

John Devino,
math teacher,
Colchester (Vermont)
High School

"As an Association leader, if I intentionally or unintentionally exclude support personnel from decision making, I'm excluding 30 to 50 percent of the learning community. We include support people on all committees—on everything from pay for performance to 'restructuring the infrastructure'—and in all our meetings with the superintendent."

Jan Noble,
president,
Colorado Springs (Colorado)
Education Association

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Organizing for Advancement

A Bridge to

Seeking strength in numbers and a better shot at professional advancement, members of the Milwaukee Educational Assistants' Association voted overwhelmingly this spring to "unify" with the NEA affiliate in the state, the Wisconsin Education Association Council.

This vote followed an affiliation campaign that included everything from a "colleague-to-colleague" video to a member-planned, WEAC-sponsored Educational Opportunities Conference.

The conference tapped an issue that, along with the need for a stronger voice in the state capital, was to dominate the campaign: professional development.

"A lot of educational assistants start out in the profession as parents who come into their children's schools to help out," says MEAA President Kris Strnad, who assists math and science teachers at Bay View High School. "Without easy access to continuing education, professional advancement is difficult for these employees, many of whom would like to become teachers."

Now, through access to WEAC's Professional Development Academy—which works collaboratively with education institutions across the state—MEAA aims to create a personal and professional development program for ed assistants at all levels.

To that end, WEAC is providing MEAA a three-year package of education grants, enabling it to offer ed assistants "more workshops and college coursework than it has in the past—all at no cost to members," says WEAC Organizer Fran McNett.

With WEAC's help, MEAA has surveyed members on course needs. And the new NEA affiliate recently sponsored workshops focusing on conflict resolution, decision making, time management, and family violence.

Those who attended the sessions received credit as part of the Professional Development Academy's ESP Certificate Program for general assistants—a first step in MEAA's push to develop a career ladder for assistants headed for the paraprofessional ranks.

And for paraprofessionals (mid-level assistants with 60 credits), MEAA has plans to organize full-credit courses.

Strnad points out that the Milwaukee district will benefit from expanded personal and professional development opportunities for MEAA members.

"In coming years, we know that a number of math and science teachers will either retire or move on to other jobs," she says. "With the training program in place, we can help the school board develop new teachers—by providing our members both course work and student teaching experiences."

Mark Hoffman

Milwaukee educational assistants like Kris Strnad, at top of photo, now have a better shot at gaining certification.

Certification

Classroom Teamwork: It Can Be Taught

North Carolina teacher assistant Barbara Highsmith says that sometimes-strained relationships between teachers and aides can be fixed, "but the problem is that some teachers don't know how to use assistants effectively."

Highsmith, who works at Wilmington's Gregory School of Science, Math, and Technology, has worked with several colleagues to address this problem.

With support from the school board, they're conducting a series of 10 two-hour workshops for *all* New Hanover County classroom employees to teach them how to work better together—for the benefit of the kids.

Workshop leaders, teachers and assistants alike, advise teachers not to assume they must lead every class activity.

"Don't ask your assistant to do busy work," Highsmith tells workshop groups.

"Sometimes we hear that the teacher delegates only the jobs she doesn't want to do herself," Highsmith notes.

Some teachers, she says, rely on their assistants only for administrative tasks like making copies, supervising recess, and running errands to the main office.

On the other hand, not every aide is fully prepared to assume broader classroom duties. For that reason, the workshops also offer computer training and instruction in classroom management and conflict resolution.

"If you must deal with a difficult child, you can't have a screaming match with him or her," says Highsmith of a typical conflict that may trip up unprepared aides.

Reducing tension between teachers and assistants is important to good classroom management, concludes Highsmith, president of the New Hanover ESP Association.

"The kids pick up on things," she notes, "and they'll use the tension between the adults."

Todd S. Sumlin

North Carolina teacher assistant Barbara Highsmith, above, instructs teachers and aides on how to get along on the job.

Underground In-Service

School district officials in Cairo, Illinois, weren't pleased when 13 secretaries, bookkeepers, and computer operators joined NEA in 1994. In fact, school board members later rejected the support staff's request for in-service training similar to that provided to teachers.

"I guess they thought all of us attending a workshop would be too much like a union meeting," laughs Julie Newell, president of the Cairo Association of Educational Support Personnel.

But that rejection didn't keep these NEA members from getting training.

"We decided to organize our own sessions," says Newell, a secretary/bookkeeper at Emerson Elementary School.

Since last fall, CAESP members have met once a month after school for computer training, leadership workshops, and discourse on administrative matters.

"We attend sessions on our own time, and we raise the money we need to pay speakers and finance workshops," Newell reports.

The local executive committee selects session topics and identifies workshop facilitators—like a city police lieutenant who recently led a workshop on gangs in schools. In addition, Newell presents information from NEA conferences.

"It's a matter of finding out what our needs are and responding," explains the local president. "The superintendent is making us more militant. If we want something, we know we have to go out and get it ourselves."

Organizing As One

We Work W

Things *always* change for the better when people work together. Just ask NEA members in Marshfield, Vermont.

"In the past, I did 20 to 30 minutes in each classroom and jumped around to as many as five classrooms a day," reports Terri Corbett, a paraeducator at the pre-K-through-12 Twinfield Union School.

"In fact, sometimes I would leave a classroom, and another aide would come in right behind me."

Through careful planning and increased cooperation with teachers, paraprofessionals like Terri Corbett can get far more involved in classes.

Corbett says those days are gone, thanks to some careful planning and increased cooperation between teachers and paraeducators.

Now, Corbett and her colleagues work with just one or two teachers at a specific grade level. Corbett says she's more involved in the classroom than ever before, because she's not spread so thin.

"In the past, teachers and paras both knew the system should be working better," Corbett recalls. "We knew the administrators needed to give us some input in scheduling."

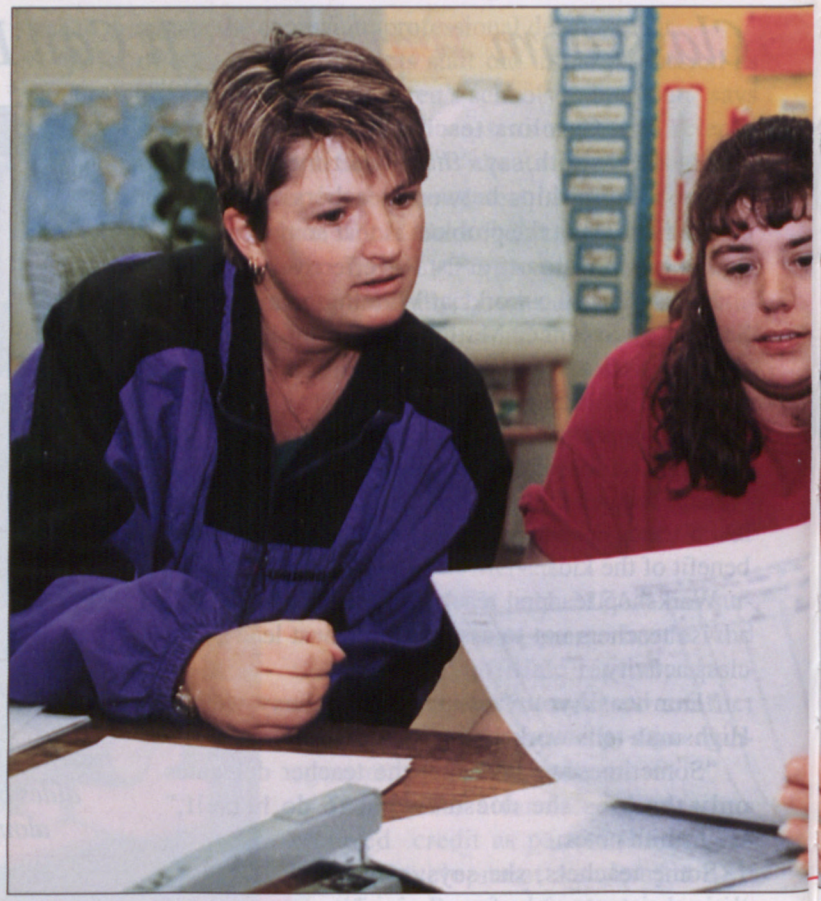
In large part, the 19 members of the Twinfield Staff Association—including paras, secretaries, custodians, and drivers—were responsible for the change that was to come.

"We're not afraid to be seen or heard," explains Corbett, the grievance officer for paraeducators.

"Three or four years back," she adds, "some of our members took state-taught paraprofessional courses, and came back and told us this system could be working better."

At the urging of its vocal paras, the district sponsored a series of workshops—conducted by University of Vermont trainers—that focused on more effective use of paraeducators. Attending were teachers, paras, and administrators.

Afterwards, administrators stopped making the schedules for paraprofessionals, turning the job over to teams of teachers and the paraprofessionals who support them. The teams turned their attention to improving scheduling, resolving conflicts, and strengthening classroom performance.



Vermont paraeducator Terri Corbett, far left, is now a full partner with teachers like Sarah Goodwin, center, and Maureen Garber. Corbett credits it all to "our mighty Association."

"Now we don't work for the teachers, we work *with* them," Corbett emphasizes. "There's a real give-and-take atmosphere here, because we have planning time with the teachers and an opportunity to choose our assignments."

So, if you're looking for advice on how to make the teacher-paraprofessional relationship work in *your* district, Corbett and her colleagues are the folks to ask.

They advise you to:

- **Make sure you're part of a team** that includes teachers and paras.
- **Don't allow yourself to be spread too thin.** One paraprofessional shouldn't be assigned to more than two teachers at a time.
- **Insist on cooperative planning time,** both with individual teachers and with the broader grade level group to which you're assigned.
- **Stick up for yourself.**

ith Teachers

Craig Line

Adjusting Some Attitudes

"Sometimes at an event, one or two teachers would sit at my table and ask what I teach. When I told them I'm a bus driver, they would just get up and leave!" laments Bonnie Chalfant.

For Chalfant, who drives in Gloucester Township, New Jersey, snubs from teacher colleagues were painful and all too common.

It was time for an attitude adjustment. Two years ago, Camden County Education Association President Earl Kights asked Chalfant to work with Collingswood teacher Pat Legge to co-chair an ESP Committee.

It's been a perfect match. Chalfant and Legge are now working to change teacher and support staff perceptions of each other.

Both women say the key to better teacher-ESP relations is finding opportunities to work together. "When you do that, you discover that you share the same concerns," says Chalfant.

The committee finds that joint teacher-ESP workshops are a great way to break the ice. During a school safety session, "four teachers came, from different districts," Chalfant reports.

"It doesn't matter *who* builds the bridges, teachers or support staff," she stresses, "as long as those bridges get built!"

"We're stronger together"

Teachers and support staff in Redding, California, have developed an enviable relationship: They bargain their union contracts jointly.

"I can't say everything's perfect," says career center technician Sharon Carelli, president of the Shasta Secondary Education Association—which represents 200 teachers and 75 ESPs. "But on the whole, this has been very beneficial for all of us."

The partnership began eight years ago, when Shasta's support staff disaffiliated from an independent state association and signed on with the NEA-affiliated SSEA.

Carelli, who works at Pioneer High School, explains that "We thought we could be stronger if we were working on issues together with the teachers."

That strength is particularly apparent at contract time, "although district negotiators still try to pit us against one another," Carelli notes.

The joint bargaining strategy, however, ensures that an ESP observes teacher talks with the district and that a teacher plays a similar role during ESP talks.

"And when it gets down to money and benefits, we're at the same table, negotiating together," Carelli points out.

That cooperative strategy extends to staffing decisions, as well as everyday issues, she adds. "Teachers have even represented us in grievances against the school board."

José Luis Villegas

Sharon Carelli says teacher-ESP unity "has been beneficial for all of us."

Pushing t

Meet Karen Mahurin, NEA's ESP of the Year

When secretary Karen Mahurin first went to work at Sears Elementary School on the Kenai Penninsula, Alaska, she vowed never to be known as a "mean old office lady." She has kept that promise.

Moreover, Mahurin—the 1997 NEA Support Person of the Year—never envisioned her office walls as some sort of boundary. She's been recognized as a community activist, a union leader, and a member of the Alaska Labor Relations Board.

Quite a list for a support person who was once told by her personnel director that "I was only worth so much."

She Reaches Out to the Community

Mahurin's worth a whole lot more to colleagues at the K-2 Sears School and in the Kenai district's 36 other worksites. And nowhere is Mahurin more valued than right at her desk, which employees describe as a warm and friendly "safe haven," where staffers and parents can vent in confidence and kids can borrow lunch money or make a phone call home.

Mahurin, who first entered Sears as a parent volunteer, works to extend this warmth to "negative" parents who may have had a bad public school experience—doing everything from encouraging them to talk directly to a teacher or the principal to referring them to community agencies.

And because this NEA member believes so strongly that "it takes a village" to nurture children, the surrounding community has become an extension of the safe zone around her desk.

Mahurin helped start a Christmas Fund Drive for needy children and now serves on the City of Kenai Planning and Zoning Commission, where she works to preserve Kenai's Old Town, with its Alaskan Native and Russian Orthodox culture.

"In all of my community and volunteer activities," Mahurin points out, "the fact that I work in our schools is well known. I love being able to dispel rumors and untruths about our schools—and I've recruited many volunteers to work in them."

She Fights for Better Working Conditions

Besides acting as an ambassador for the schools, Mahurin works to improve conditions within school buildings, as both the president of the Kenai Penninsula Educational Support Staff Association and an activist for NEA-Alaska.

Mahurin first joined the Association over concern about the liability she incurred by administering medication to students. The school had only a half-time nurse.

Five years ago, district budget cuts would have meant the outright layoff of all elementary school nurses in Mahurin's district. Mahurin pulled together nurses and secretaries from across the district to brainstorm an action plan. They persuaded a newspaper reporter to "shadow" a school secretary and learn how much time she was forced to spend in the nurse's office.

Through this media coverage, "parents learned what was happening and how valuable secretaries and nurses both are to the school," Mahurin says. The Association finally won full-time nurses in all Kenai elementary schools and went on to other victories—like stopping food service subcontracting and winning leave, benefits, and prep time for ESL tutors.

Sears Elementary now has a full-time nurse, Bekkie Jackson, thanks to a media campaign brainstormed by Karen Mahurin and her local Association.

he Boundaries

Mahurin makes her desk a "safe haven" for kids and adults. And through her union activism, school staffers (bottom photo) have won real improvements.

She Organizes the Unorganized

Mahurin works to spread the union message beyond her schools as both a member of the Kenai Penninsula Central Labor Council and a volunteer organizer for NEA-Alaska.

By small plane, four-wheel drive, and even dogsled, this activist has brought the union gospel to unorganized educational support personnel in some pretty remote spots.

Dropped in places like Bethel, Sitka, or Nunivak Island, Mahurin hands out Association literature and speaks from the heart.

"In Alaska," she points out, "employees have rights, but cannot pursue them unless they are organized."

This school secretary also plays a larger Association role as union representative to the Alaska Labor Relations Board, which oversees public sector labor relations. There, she gets a "very good perspective of other unions," does a tremendous amount of reading—"especially legal briefs"—and listens to testimony.

"I like it when common folks, not attorneys, testify before us," Mahurin says.

Mahurin's track record is testimony in itself about the worth of "common" folks.

"Too many ESPs feel they are 'only' a secretary, 'only' a custodian," Mahurin concludes. "We should feel good about ourselves and our place in the community. And we should work with teachers and with the community to make our schools a happening place."

Jeff Schultz

Taking on

A Voice For Urban Children

Family support worker Sapina Pele lives in a section of Seattle many people avoid and works with children and families for whom survival is a struggle. So, most appropriately, she holds a seat on NEA's Emergency Commission on Urban Children.

The commission—which unites NEA urban activists with some of America's most committed advocates for kids—addresses the many problems faced in inner city schools. This year, Pele reports, "We've split ourselves into two issue work groups: reading—to follow President Clinton's goal of ensuring that all children can read by the third grade—and health."

Pele sees her contribution to the panel as a little different from that of teachers. "I give the perspective of someone who is in a supporting role," she says. "I listen a lot and I take the information back to turn it into action."

Pele, who works at Arbor Heights Elementary School—doing everything from finding warm clothing for students to getting them food stamps—stresses that she lives the issues discussed by the commission. "As a family support worker, I'm looking at the home, the school, and things as basic as making sure kids are eating."

Like many other ESPs, Pele concludes, "I have the opportunity to look at the whole picture."

Ellen Bonner

"If children don't have a healthy environment, it's like a dead end," says Seattle family support worker Sapina Pele. "I think, as a society, we often take the hope and dream out of our urban kids." That's why this Association activist is serving on NEA's Emergency Commision on Urban Children.

A Different Kind of Teacher

Been there. Done that. Walked a mile in your shoes. Be the subject playground discipline or fighting privatization, "your comfort level is a higher" when you're trained on the issue by a fellow school support staffer, says Marcy Hartung, a teacher assistant for the emotionally impaired in Jackson, Michigan.

Hartung knows from experience. She and three other support people—head custodian Tim Smith, paraprofessional Dan Haske, and bus driver Sam Van Vuuren—belong to the Michigan Education Association's 15-member ESP Cadre, which trains union members, ESPs and teachers alike, on every issue from conflict management to team building for bargaining.

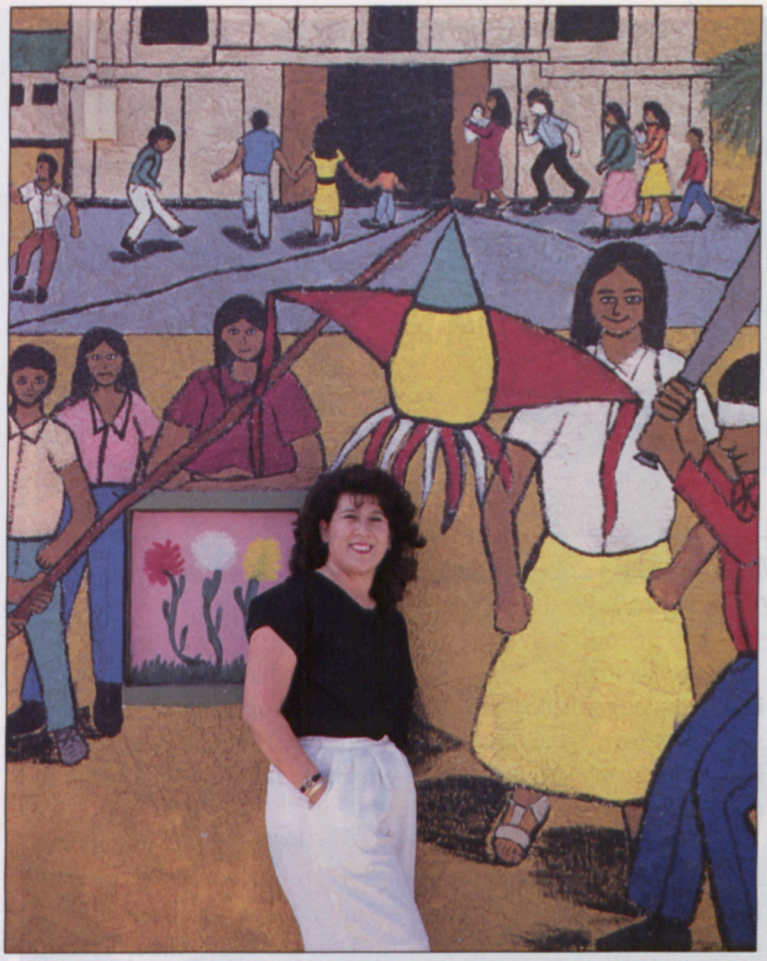
These ESP educators aren't amateurs. They've been thoroughly briefed on adult learning styles, content, presentation skills, and "how to look as professional as possible," stresses Hartung, who's been on the training circuit for four years.

This teacher assistant finds running a workshop for teachers to be "empowering." Often those students don't realize at first that Hartung isn't certified, she notes, "but in the course of conversation, it comes out and lots of times people are real surprised. It's a good feeling."

Of course, it's a little harder to be a "prophet" within a 50-mile radius of Jackson County, where she's known, Hartung muses. That said, "I'm still well received by teachers."

In her spare time, Michigan teacher assistant Marcy Hartung educates Association members on a variety of topics—everything from diversity to stress and behavior management.

New Roles



Don Stevenson

Meet a Vice Mayor

High school administrative secretary Veronica Flores was so deeply troubled by her Arizona community's high truancy and dropout rate—the graduation rate is 10 percent—that she did something about it. Flores became the vice mayor of Guadalupe, population 5,600.

When she took office last year, the vice mayor hit the ground running. Flores got the town council to pay more attention to schools and was instrumental in the hiring of a town judge who supports education.

This politician's top priority is education. She sounds like one of us...

"The judge is now working with the council and the schools to enforce the truancy laws," Flores reports with satisfaction.

This public official has other irons in the fire. She has persuaded the town to work with Marcos De Niza High School to jointly fund the hiring of a youth "liaison" to track the attendance of students—from freshman to senior year—and to work one-on-one to keep them in school.

Moreover, Flores is educating the county supervisor on the truancy issue and working with her to win grants for both a mentor program and a computer lab—enabling students to do their homework on a computer.

Sure, the vice mayor is interested in other issues, like economic development and quality housing. But priority number one is the kids. "I see the next generation as the generation that will take care of us," Flores stresses. "Education leads to pride in your community, a better job, and self esteem."

But other educators already know that.

What they may not appreciate, Flores points out, is that "There's quite a difference between making a presentation before a town board and being on that board. You'll have a stronger chance to make a difference when you're directly involved in government and making important decisions."

Robert Chase

School secretary Veronica Flores, photo above, is "making a difference" as vice mayor of her Arizona community.

The Organizers

Running c

Crossing all Boundaries

Jon Brunk

Why does Washington State's Cuong Truong reach out to immigrant families? "I want to help," he says simply.

No one knows the difficulties of learning a new language and culture better than Cuong Truong, an instructional assistant in Bellingham, Washington who came to the United States from Vietnam 10 years ago.

Truong began putting his life experiences to work last year, translating report cards and interpreting parent-teacher conferences for almost 30 Vietnamese families in Bellingham's 12 elementary schools.

"I want to know parents can understand what their children are doing at school," this NEA member says.

As a member of the district's English as a Second Language (ESL) group, Truong organized a program that enables Vietnamese, Hispanic and Russian families to receive information about report cards and conferences.

Truong's goal: increase parents' comfort level in talking to teachers.

Many Vietnamese parents in the Bellingham area have a limited knowledge of English or don't have an opportunity to attend school to learn the language, Truong says. His help is necessary because a growing number of Vietnamese families have come to the school district in the past year.

Besides translating, Truong serves as a site council member at Alderwood Elementary School. He also works at nearby Roosevelt Elementary School, supervising children during recess and in the lunchrooms. And, in his spare time, Truong assists at a parent literacy class.

Kris Craig

In-Service for Everybody

Thanks to a professional development grant, teachers at the K-4 Richmond (Rhode Island) School have frequent in-service days.

And, thanks in part to an NEA local affiliate leader, students too

Marie Glass, far left, has invited speakers like this sign language teacher.

on Inspiration

Remembering Kevin Forney

The spirit of the late Kevin Forney, the first ESP at-large member of NEA's Board of Directors, lives on at Clackamas Community College, Oregon—where this graphic artist touched co-workers with his keen sense of humor, unifying skills, and ability to defuse tense situations.

Before Forney died in 1993, he urged the establishment of an endowed scholarship for classified NEA members on campus.

Through intensive fundraising—and a matching foundation grant from the college—165 members of the Clackamas Community College Association of Classified Employees have fulfilled this request, raising more than $10,000 for the Kevin Forney Memorial Scholarship. Now they're ready to spend some money.

The first annual $500 scholarship award will go this autumn for a support staffer to use for "self improvement, staff development, or even to build self-esteem," reports selection committee member Jeanette Kmetic, assistant to the director of physical plant. "There are no restrictions."

Community college staffers honor a departed colleague with a unique scholarship.

Steve Gibbons

This no-strings policy is in keeping with Forney's philosophy, says another committee member, Kathy Nelson. "Kevin wanted a scholarship that was left open and would help us improve our lives," she stresses, "even if it wasn't job related."

Nelson, who worked with Forney in the college publications department, fondly recalls a colleague who viewed everyone in the campus community as "family."

This NEA pioneer "took away names, titles, and other artificial barriers and had us all work together," she concludes.

Kevin Forney, above, touched co-workers with his unifying skills. Now a Forney scholarship committee, top photo, is fulfilling one of his last requests.

have their own "in-service" days while the big people are away at professional workshops.

Teacher Assistant Marie Glass, the president of Clariho ESP, serves on a "core team"—along with the principal, three teachers, and a parent—that maintains a Community Resource Bank of local speakers for the kids.

Serious stuff, this.

Richmond youngsters have rubbed shoulders with everybody from an equestrian and a biologist to a physical therapist and a computer specialist. It's "wonderful" for speakers and students alike, says Glass.

Community people "get to show kids what they do," she explains, "and the kids see a different face in the classroom."

Recently, notes Glass, a computer expert spoke.

"I was amazed by the questions and how much the students wanted to know," she says.

"My goal," sums up Glass, "is to ensure that the kids don't get left out while we're enriching ourselves."

The Organizers

Building t

Passing the Torch

At age 57, Clarence Krusemark earned his private pilot's license. At age 67, this Missourian has just become president of his NEA local affiliate, Joplin ESP.

Meet a high flying, bonafide Union Man. Krusemark is also a retired member of the Pipefitters' Union—he'll celebrate 50 years of membership in 1999—and the third of four generations of union pipefitters.

Krusemark, who now drives a pre-school handicapped bus, insists he has trouble finding the right words to express his views. But just listen to his thoughts on unionism: "In my heart, I believe that without unions in the American workplace, we'd still be working for a dollar a day and grub."

Joplin ESP needs dedication like this. Over the past five years, Krusemark has labored to boost the local's membership and get more people to turn out for meetings.

When his hard working predecessor, Jane Daniels, asked Krusemark to run for the presidency, the Union Man knew what was to be done.

"All my time and effort over recent years would have gone for nought without taking the next step," he explains.

Nope, it's not a question of grabbing power.

Krusemark is now working with younger officers, like local Vice President Sherri Rimar, to pass on the union skills—and dedication—that you can only acquire over 50 years. He's passing the torch to a new generation.

A Parent Runs This Local

Security officer Ilena Pitts inherited quite a challenge when she became president of the newly merged Atlantic City (New Jersey) Education Association in 1992. Her colleagues were divided by title, race, and even gender—and the then-superintendent virtually refused to recognize the union.

But Pitts, a parent activist-turned school employee, exerted the organizing skills it takes to hold any family together. She boosted member involvement in Association activities—from 2 percent in 1992 to 40 percent today—and worked hard to win parent support for schools.

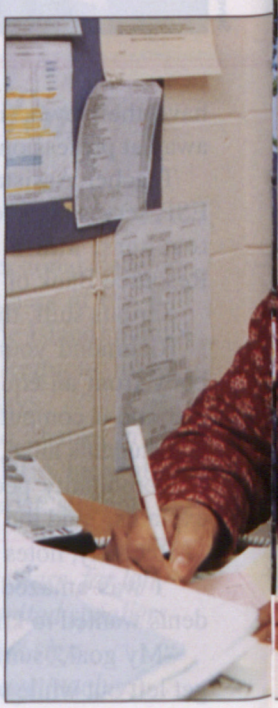
Now teachers and support employees mix during staff parties, Association reps actively recruit certified and classified people to every local committee, and a vigilant grievance committee makes the administration deal with employee concerns.

Pitts, who advocates for *all* her members at Parent Advisory Council meetings, pulls parents into the schools by recruiting them as playground, cafeteria, and clerical aides.

Her NEA affiliate is allying itself with community groups and sponsors three elementary schools in educational "Kids' Fairs."

What advice can Pitts offer to your local leaders?

"Stay in touch with your UniServ office," she says. "Make sure you have a listening ear, are very cooperative, and focus on what you're here for: giving boys and girls the quality education they deserve."

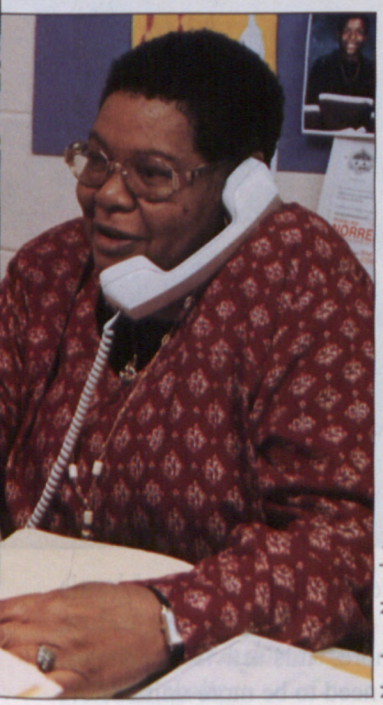


Ilena Pitts has boosted member involvement and reached out to parents.

he Association

Andy Lavalley

Says Joplin ESP President Clarence Krusemark, 67: "If it ain't union, I don't want anything to do with it." He's what they call a Union Man.



New Jersey Newsphotos

A Driving Ambition: Organize!

Rolf Ottum has been restoring and driving old hotrods for more than 20 years, so he's no stranger to the highways of North Dakota.

But as president of the Grand Forks Education Support Personnel Association, this head custodian drives even *more*—up to 350 miles round trip to recruit new Association members.

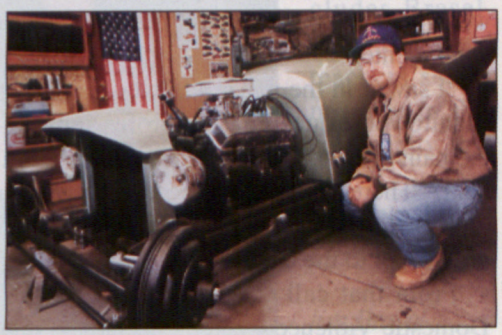
"I'm willing to go anywhere in the state if I can help," Ottum says. "We can be more effective with new, active locals."

What makes this organizer so persuasive? "I'm a from-the-heart guy when I talk to people, plus this is fun."

In three short years, Ottum's attitude has helped his own NEA affiliate grow from 50 people to more than 120.

It's only through active ESP involvement, this organizer contends, that things will begin to change for the better. In his work at Century Elementary School, Ottum says he has seen tremendous changes in the attitudes of administrators and teachers toward educational support personnel.

"Before, ed support was not thought of as an integral part of the school," says Ottum. "But now people are starting to see that we are here for kids and the appreciation level of administrators and teachers is increasing."



Dave Sampson

When he's not restoring hotrods, above, Rolf Ottum is talking union to unorganized school support staff.

Caring Ab

A Girl's Best Friend

As little girls grow into young women, school secretary Bette Brooks wants to ensure that as many as possible have a nurturing guide for their journey. And she's doing just that as president of the Baltimore, Maryland chapter of the National Women of Achievement.

"We have a dynamic youth group and they are learning basic lessons in character," says Brooks, who works at Southwest Academy in Baltimore County. "We have mentoring programs, cultural trips, tutoring, and we always have the girls doing some kind of public service. We also teach them how to help each other."

Brooks helps these young women master everything from etiquette to articulation, teaching what she calls "life education."

"When you love something, you are able to share it," says this NEA activist. "I love our children and I want them to love themselves. I had a parent tell me her daughter was so shy before she got involved in the program. She thanked us for helping her meet the right people."

Brooks—who is vice president of the Baltimore County Instructional Assistants and Clerical Employees—calls education "one of the most important elements of life."

"Through the National Women of Achievement," she says, "I want to enhance the lives of these young women."

NEA member Bette Brooks teaches young women somet

They Made Christmas Possible

For many women and children suffering abuse, a domestic violence shelter is the last hope.

That's why Manitowoc, Wisconsin paraprofessional Carol Levendusky took action last year when she read about budget cuts at her local abuse center.

"I saw it in the paper and we—members of the Manitowoc Education Paraprofessionals— know the pain of cuts," says Levendusky, the local president. "There is a very big need to have a women's and children's violence center. I just made a phone call to the center."

From that call, Levendusky got a list of the Domestic Violence Center's needs and planned to meet as many as possible by the 1996 holidays.

"We collected over $200 in cash and about $300 in gifts," she recalls.

Levendusky's own gift came late one night when she was at the center wrapping gifts. "One woman came down and thanked me from the bottom of her heart. She said her kids wouldn't be having Christmas if it weren't for us."

The big event attracted both teachers and administrators and Levendusky says it was a bonding experience for everyone. Now her local is trying to set up tutoring and other volunteer programs for the center.

"We're trying to work together more," this activist concludes. "We're all in the same union and we need to be more unified."

bout the Community

Joseph Hyde

hing she calls "life education."

Andy Manis

Carol Levendusky, center, and co-workers plan ways to assist a domestic violence shelter.

A Pillar of the Community

A former school board member and now an usher in his church, Jim Brasel is known and respected in the small central Illinois town of St. Elmo. But that trust was strained when Brasel, president of the St. Elmo ESP Association, led a grueling two-year campaign to win a first union contract—finally signed last December.

Brasel, who has just retired as head school district maintenance worker, had many nerve-jarring experiences during those two years—the first tense meetings with Superintendent William Bell, a community outreach campaign, an Illinois Education Association-NEA support rally, and endless bargaining sessions.

The stress caught up with Jim Brasel. He had a heart attack and removed himself from the bargaining table.

"Some people in town frowned at me and thought we were complaining like children about the superintendent," he says.

But after the ESP contract was signed, all of St. Elmo learned more about Bell when he reassigned a popular music teacher and increased his workload.

An extraordinary alliance—parents, teachers, and support staffers—forced the local school board to send the superintendent packing.

"Now people in town know what we went through for two years and respect me," concludes Brasel. "And ESPs and teachers sent a message to this community that we're united and work together well."

David Vitoff

Jim Brasel again enjoys respect in St. Elmo, Illinois

Caring Ab

Jim Tiller

Wear this Button—Please

The button reads "Reclaim Education's Share." If you cross the path of Nilda Figueroa-Rodriguez, you'll walk away wearing one—and instantly knowledgeable of Florida NEA members' campaign to win adequate funding for their hard-pressed schools.

Figueroa-Rodriguez, a clerk in the Volusia County school district's Exposure Control Program, is a vital part of the Florida Teaching Profession-NEA's drive to win a constitutional amendment increasing

Clerk Nilda Figueroa-Rodriguez is a key player in her state Association's campaign to increase education's share of the Florida state budget.

Firm, But a Friend

Most graduates of Huguenot High School in Richmond, Virginia return for the big basketball games because they want to see old friends and favorite teachers. But many also come back for another reason: to thank security specialist Gordon Walker.

"I have everyone from the worst of the drug dealers to the honor students coming by to hug me," says Walker. "I think the term is 'tough love' and I had to do a lot of that."

Walker has made himself a rock-like presence in these young people's lives and helped make their school a better place.

"They never had volleyball at Huguenot High," this NEA member points out. "I approached the administration and they agreed to finance it."

"The physical education teacher and I also initiated a strength training program for the advanced P.E. class and an after-school program for all athletes."

At every turn, Walker is there to lend a hand.

"If a kid needs money to eat, I go into my pocket," he says. "I find out what is needed by looking around and asking questions."

Be it working concession stands to send the volleyball team to camp or taking students to fill out job applications, this mentor has made his own answers.

"I wasn't prepared for what I saw when I went to the school system," concludes the former police officer, "but these students appreciate someone who is firm and a friend."

Don't be fooled by Gordon Walker's tough image. He's a guy who cares deeply about kids.

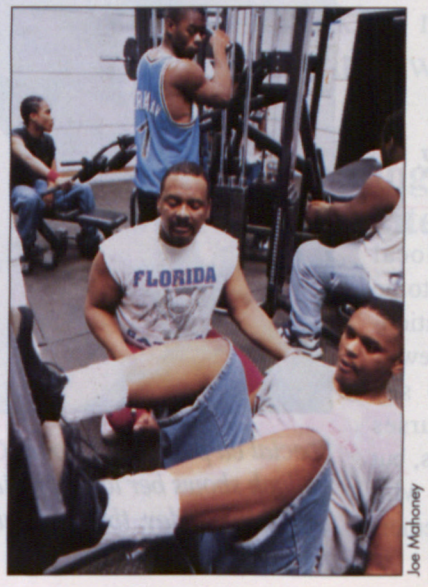
bout the Community

education's share of the state budget to 40 percent. That's the level of funding Florida schools received before the legislature passed the state lottery 10 years ago.

Figueroa-Rodriguez helped FTP-NEA set a record for ballot initiative signatures, persuading some 2,800 citizens to endorse the idea. She even recruited her retired neighbor, her husband, and her son to help in petition signing efforts.

"I think some people are surprised that I feel so strongly about it, but when I explain it, they understand," this activist explains. "I always said I would never be involved in politics and this has some saying, 'Wow, you woke up.' And I say, 'Yeah, I woke up to something positive.'"

Figueroa-Rodriguez says working on this campaign has helped her push aside any hesitation about getting involved in educational politics. "Now my son calls me the political cheerleader. I say, 'Stop it—I can't wear those little skirts.'"



Joe Mahoney

Charles Slate

Earl Brooks keeps suspended kids in school— and exposes them to learning.

This Program Stops for Everyone

When he drove a school bus, Earl Brooks—now a custodian at Peedee Elementary in Conway, South Carolina— not only took students home, he also kept them in school.

Two years ago, Brooks created STOP—the Student Time Out Program—as an alternative to out-of-school suspension. His goal: to keep students who "need to learn" in school.

"Rather than send suspended students home, I keep them in the classroom," says Brooks, a member of the Horry County Education Association.

With help from teachers, students placed in the STOP program review tough subjects and complete homework assignments for the duration of their suspension.

"Children need to be in a learning environment," Brooks stresses.

As an incentive, Brooks also established the 100 Plus Club, a way to reward students who perform well on math and spelling tests. Brooks awards prizes of pencils, keychains, and other small trinkets to successful students in the STOP program.

"I'm just trying to make a difference," he explains. "I care for children, I love them—and sometimes they just need a little help."

Taking on HIV

Needed: More Than Rubber Gloves

Four years ago, the Lansing, Michigan school district cut spending on in-service health training, forcing it to adopt "universal" training on hot issues such as HIV and hepatitis.

"But this training basically consisted of a state video that made employees aware of minimal health issues," says paraprofessional David Hockaday.

That's when Hockaday, full-time president of Lansing Educational Assistants, began a crusade to protect the health and safety of his 600 members—many of whom deal with special needs students. He worked for more than two years to secure medical supplies, such as gloves and smocks, to protect employees against bodily fluids.

But without workshops on preventative measures and procedures, Hockaday stresses, the supplies don't make much impact.

"Recently I received a call from a special ed assistant who was required to do suctioning, but didn't know how," he says. "And now our members are concerned about how to deal with HIV strains A through E."

Hockaday believes that solid in-service training will allow his members to take a proactive stance on health issues.

"Parents also need to be involved, so they know what's going on," he points out.

Now, thanks to a grant from NEA' s Health Information Network, the local and school district hope to be able to train all the educational staff, not just a select few.

"We would like to see training not just for nurses and educational assistants, but the school secretaries who often have to deal with emergencies," says Hockaday.

*David Hockaday has secured medical supplies for ed assistants exposed to bodily fluids. **Now** he's fighting for training.*

Robert Chase

Special ed paraprofessional Carol Pollock shows her local president, David Hockaday, the medical supplies needed to do her job.

In the next 10 years, the nation will need to hire 2 million new teachers. And **YOU** could be one of them.

Photography: Mike Malyszko

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REACH FOR THE POWER. TEACH.

The Organized

Here's Wh

Transportation, Delivery, Vehicle Mechanics

The Right Tools, The Right Threads

"Small" changes in a collective bargaining agreement can make a big difference for people trying to do their jobs. Just ask heavy duty maintenance mechanic Bob Galizia.

You can find this NEA member working at the school district maintenance yard, or just about anywhere else in or around Mesa, Arizona, fixing the air conditioning system on a stalled special education bus.

Galizia is properly equipped for the job. In the 1996 contract bargained by the Mesa Education Support Personnel Association, mechanics saw their annual tool allowance jump almost 200 percent—to $350 per year.

"I can work more efficiently now, with tools less likely to break," says Galizia, who's Master ASE (Automotive Service Excellence) certified.

"I can also get the special fittings and adapters I need," he adds, "rather than being told, 'Here's what you have to work with.'"

The uniforms that come with the current Association contract help Galizia get the attention—and trust—of students stranded by a bus breakdown, and of the general public.

"When you're out there during second shift, the uniform says that here is a guy who knows what he's doing, who can be trusted," the mechanic explains.

"The kids recognize me quickly," he adds, "and so it's easier to ensure their safety and get repairs done fast."

National Average Full-Time Salary, 1996-97:

$20,948

Source: NEA Research

To do quality work, you need the proper equipment. With the $350 annual tool allowance in his Association-negotiated contract, Arizona maintenance mechanic Bob Galizia can work with pride.

hat We Do. . .

Jeff Topping

The Organized

Here's Wh

Technical Services

Enjoying a Dual Role

"People often ask, 'Why are you with a teachers' union?' I tell them we have a natural alliance for delivering quality education," says Jim Plaza, an audio/visual technician at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

"As educational support personnel," says Plaza, an activist in the University Staff Association/MTA, "we have many of the same goals as the faculty union—the NEA-affiliated Massachusetts Society of Professors—and we mutually strive to attain them."

Plaza, the grievance officer for his NEA local affiliate, knows that employee jobs can be improved in many ways when the two locals communicate—especially on issues like funding.

"We're the flagship university within the state higher ed system," he explains, "but seeking adequate funding is still a constant battle in Boston."

The university, as a public institution, serves a vital role in providing educational opportunities, Plaza emphasizes.

"I completed my undergraduate program part-time while working full-time," he says, "so I know how important it is to have access to higher education."

Plaza clearly savors his "dual role" as ESP and Association activist: "I'm working where I'm needed most. Without the strong union support we get, my kind of job can be the first to go."

National Average Full-Time Salary, 1996-97:
$31,680
Source: NEA Research

Jim Harrison

Audio/visual technician Jim Plaza's other "job" is NEA activist. It's a perfect match.

Health and Student Services

A Real Confidence Builder

"Mrs. Kitty," as Catherine Molenda is known at Countryside Elementary School, is glad to have the Barrington (Illinois) School Employees Organization on her side, helping her do a better job.

"I never realized, until I was on the last bargaining team, how much support there is behind the scenes from all levels of NEA," says Molenda, who staffs Countryside's health office. "It really opened my eyes and made me more confident."

Bolstering that confidence even more is an Association-negotiated personal growth program that allows classified employees to attend work-related training seminars at employer expense.

"This training is something the teachers always had," Molenda points out. "Thanks to my union, I'm attending a seminar on children's grief. Sometimes I'm the first person a child sees after a death in the family."

Molenda's local NEA affiliate is currently negotiating for two other health office improvements: written job descriptions and a schedule that meets kids' needs.

"We need to have the health office open 15 minutes earlier in the morning and 15 minutes after school," stresses Molenda. "These are the times when lots of accidents happen.

"I'm not sure how soon," she pledges, "but we're going to win this!"

Thanks to Association-negotiated seminars, Catherine Molenda can do more for students.

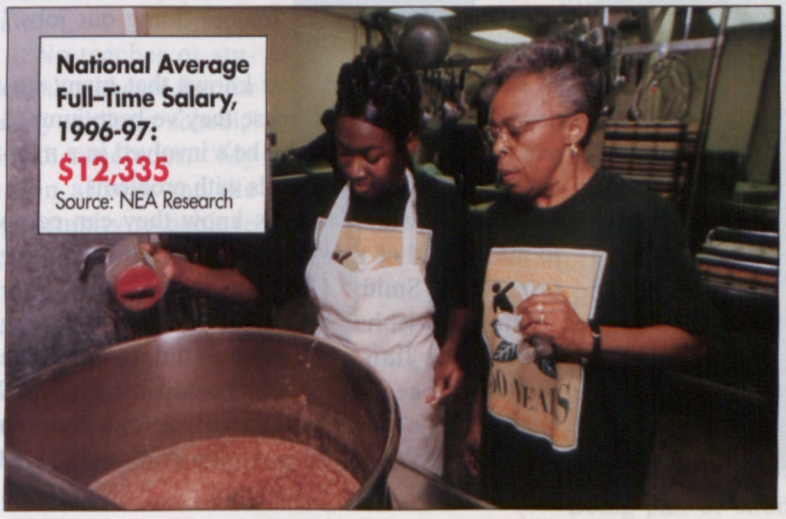
hat We Do...

Food Service

Serving More Than Food

At Atlanta's E. L. Connally Elementary School, some 1,100 meals—breakfast and lunch combined—are served daily under the watchful eye of food service supervisor Annie Hutchison.

But Hutchison has learned, through a decade of NEA activism, that her job is about serving children, not just serving meals.



National Average Full-Time Salary, 1996-97:
$12,335
Source: NEA Research

Annie Hutchison's job takes her from the kitchen to the cash register, below right.

National Average Full-Time Salary, 1996-97:
$23,985
Source: NEA Research

Michelle Litvin

"The union has helped me to see the importance of what I do as a link in the chain of educating the whole child," says this 29-year school employee. "That gives me motivation to do a better job."

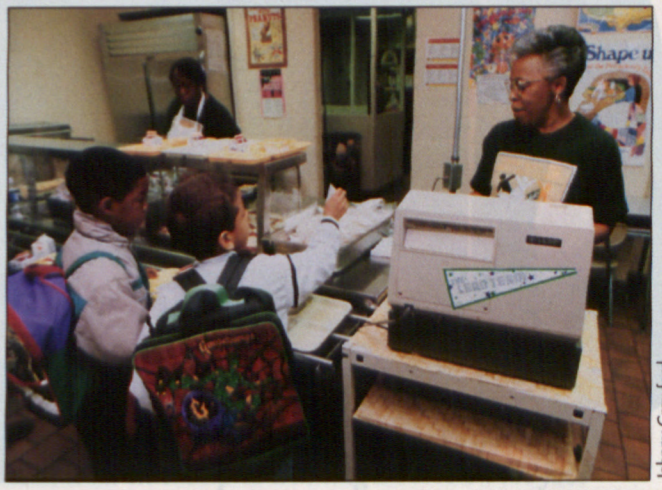
Despite the mountains of paperwork she faces daily, this supervisor is at the cash register during breakfast and lunch service, interacting with the kids.

"We have to be role models for children from troubled homes and neighborhoods," stresses Hutchison, a governing board member of the Georgia Association of Educators. "We have to feed them in many ways."

Working with teachers in the Association has fostered a close working relationship, she points out, "putting all of us on the same page."

The payoff: Hutchison has flagged troubled children for the school social worker at least four times this past year and helped get other kids fed who otherwise would have faced school on an empty stomach.

These children arrived hungry every day, but too late for the breakfast program because of family problems. Hutchison brought the problem to the teaching staff and administration, and they all worked it out—together.



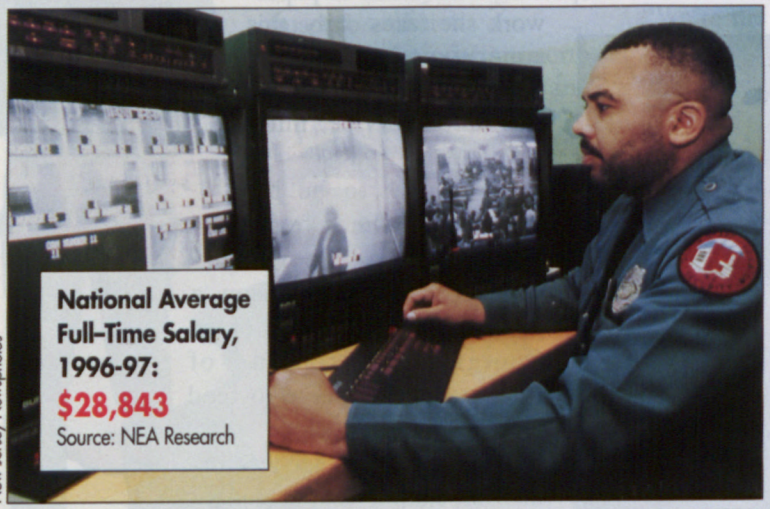
Johnny Crawford

The Organized | Here's Wh

Security Services

Conquering Fear in the Classroom

Gangs, weapons, and 2,800 students face security officer Doug Smith daily at Trenton (New Jersey) Central High School. But thanks to doors opened by his union—the Trenton Security Officers Association—Smith has the tools to make his job easier, more fulfilling, and safer.



National Average Full-Time Salary, 1996-97:
$28,843
Source: NEA Research

New Jersey Newsphotos

As local vice president, Smith is involved—along with the local teachers' Association, clergy, and parents—in a Coalition for Safe Schools. The group has won consistent, system-wide enforcement of suspension rules for students bringing weapons to school.

"This means support for our doing our jobs," Smith explains.

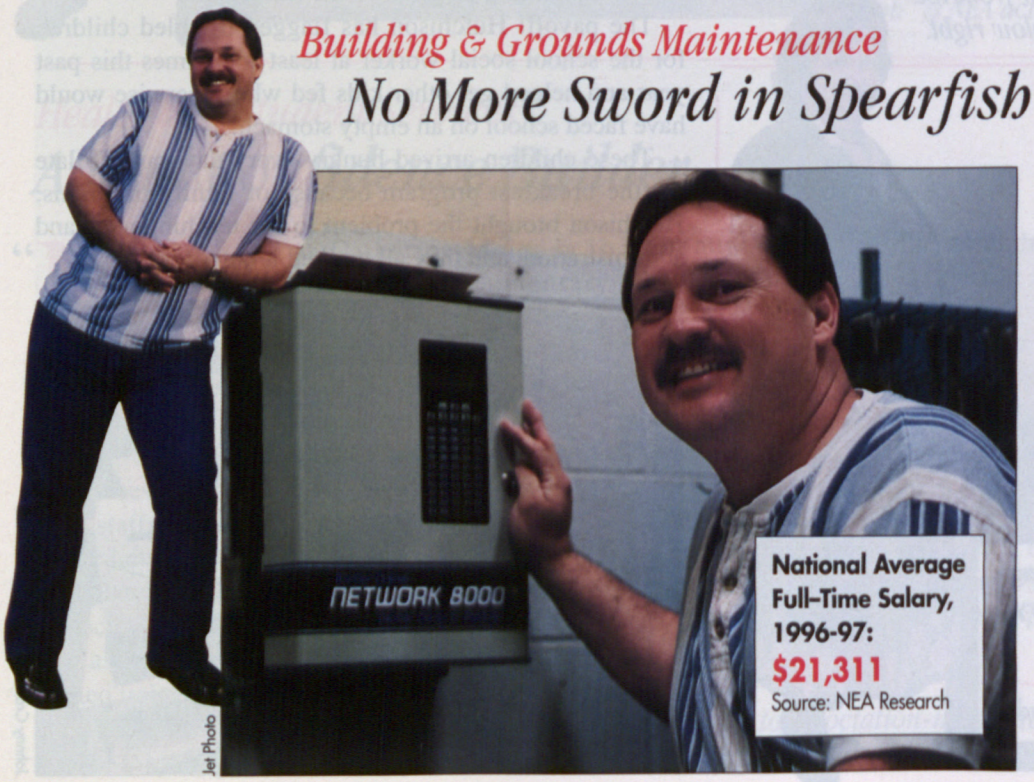
But the security officer knows that many students bring weapons because they've been jumped and are scared. That's why he's involved in a mentoring program that aids kids with problems.

"It helps when students know they can come to me instead of bringing a weapon to school for protection," Smith says.

This activist has also attended courses on how to serve as liaison between students and the police and seminars—conducted by his NEA state affiliate—on gang activities. And, through the Association, Smith is working on a site-based

Building & Grounds Maintenance

No More Sword in Spearfish



National Average Full-Time Salary, 1996-97:
$21,311
Source: NEA Research

Jet Photo

For the first time in his life, 43-year-old Jeff Kaitfors doesn't have to worry about being fired without a good reason.

That's because Kaitfors, a custodian at Spearfish (South Dakota) Public High School, finally has a union contract and representation by the Spearfish Classified Education Association (SCEA)—after working at the school for 17 years.

See that smile? Custodian Jeff Kaitfors finally enjoys some job security.

...at We Do...

team of teachers, custodians, cafeteria workers, and parents to improve the operation of the school's facilities—and keep them safe.

"No teacher or student should ever fear for safety while in school," Smith concludes. "My union affords me the opportunity to achieve my goal: a safe environment so that students can learn."

With Association backing, security officer Doug Smith has tools to make schools safer.

"Now there has to be good reason for a firing—and due process, too," says Kaitfors, "not just the principal deciding he doesn't like you. A sword no longer is hanging over my head.

"Before we had the union," he adds, "'negotiations' were just us saying what we wanted and administrators telling us what we were going to get."

Since the two-year contract was signed in March, "I've felt more interested in my job," Kaitfors beams. "Now we get listened to."

"The union has changed how I look at myself, other SCEA members, and school in general," he concludes. "I feel like I'm part of the education process."

One graduating senior named Stephanie has noticed the difference in how Kaitfors feels about his job.

"He's not getting walked on any more," she says. "My father seems a lot happier!"

Paraprofessionals

Her Goal: A Union Contract

Above anything else, Gloria Avalos simply wants to do her job. But she's often not allowed to do it.

That's why Avalos and other activists in the NEA/AFT-affiliated Classified School Employees Council in Las Cruces, New Mexico, want a contract and are seeking a union representation election this fall.

Avalos is an education assistant in the bilingual first grade class at Washington Elementary. She works with 19 children, only six of whom entered school speaking English.

"The problem is that the administration pulls us out and uses us anywhere and everywhere to do anything they need doing, all to avoid paying for subs," explains the 25-year school employee.

Avalos knows that the union can provide a voice on issues and policy—like the teachers already have. And she has other goals.

"Many parents are undocumented and afraid we will report them," she points out. "Being part of strong national organizations that stand behind the principle that all children have the right to an education—no matter where they are from or their immigration status—helps me win the trust of the families.

"A union agreement," Avalos sums up, "will mean I'll have rights and that will make a big difference, both for me and those I seek to help."

Liz Ward

For Gloria Avalos, it all stacks up to winning a voice on the job.

The Organized What We Do

Trades, Crafts, Machine Operation
He Makes Schools Safer

Robert Lepak, a school district electrician in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, says the Association has played a major role in making his schools safer.

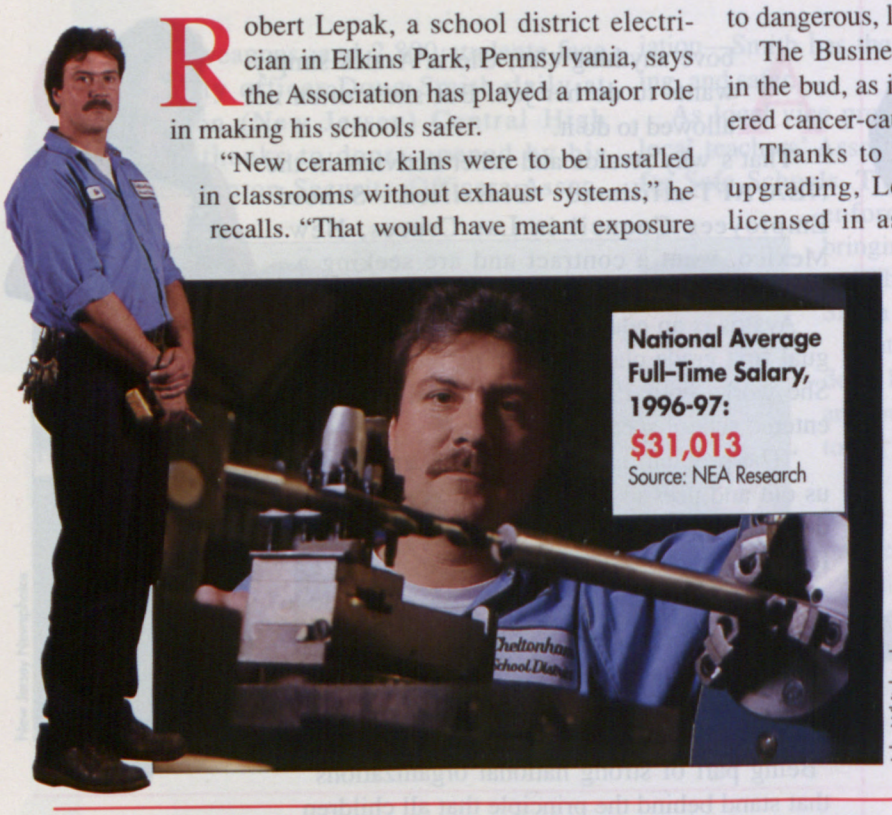
"New ceramic kilns were to be installed in classrooms without exhaust systems," he recalls. "That would have meant exposure to dangerous, lead-based exhaust from the paint."

The Business Employees Council nipped this problem in the bud, as it did when electricians and plumbers uncovered cancer-causing asbestos behind school walls.

Thanks to BEC-negotiated training funds for skills upgrading, Lepak—the local vice president—became licensed in asbestos abatement. His knowledge, plus Association clout, stopped the contracting out of asbestos removal.

"Many of the cleanup people the district brought in weren't going by the book and we couldn't allow them to jeopardize the children or employees," Lepak points out.

"We affiliated with NEA last year and that made us stronger and built communication between the teachers and us," he concludes. "We got their support against contracting out, and they appreciated the role that support staff play in education."



National Average Full-Time Salary, 1996-97:
$31,013
Source: NEA Research

John Whitehead

Robert Lepak is now licensed in asbestos abatement—thanks to the Association.

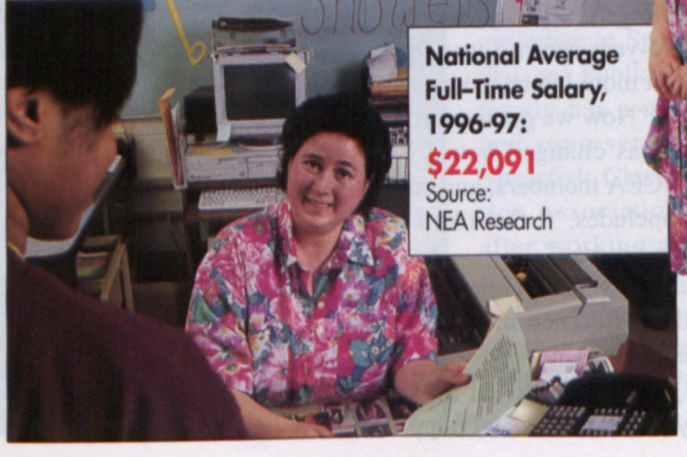
Secretarial, Clerical, Administrative Services
She's Part of a Team

Four years ago, when secretary Peggy Campbell transferred to the counseling office of Orchard View High School in Muskegon, Michigan, work from her previous job in the principal's office traveled along with her.

"That wasn't right," Campbell says. "My job is to be there for the children in the counseling office. I need all my attention focused on listening to them."

Now Campbell has a chance to address this problem as a first-time member of her NEA local's contract negotiating committee. Among other things, the committee is seeking written job descriptions.

Campbell has long appreciated her Association-won benefits, like a top-notch health plan. And belonging to NEA, along with the two counselors in her office, has, Campbell points out, "helped us foster respect for each other and made us into an important team."



National Average Full-Time Salary, 1996-97:
$22,091
Source: NEA Research

Robert Chase

Peggy Campbell says NEA involvement has given her "increased confidence."

Knowledge is Power.
That's Why We've Created the
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NEA has created the ESP Information System for you. Now it is quick and easy for members and staff to get information about key educational support personnel issues through technology. So network and…

E-mail.

Are you interested in participating in some of the best dialogue on ESP-related issues—such as contracting out, collaborative bargaining, political action, and organizing? Become a member of the ESP Listserv! The ESP Listserv is a network of NEA ESP members and staff who subscribe to an Internet mailing list. Through that list, they can discuss ESP issues via E-mail.

To subscribe to the ESP Listserv, send an E-mail to majordomo@cet.nea.org, leave the subject line blank, and write the message *subscribe esp* in the text box. You will receive a welcome message in reply. After subscribing, send all messages to esp@cet.nea.org.

Need more information? E-mail the facilitator of the list at TimSmith1@aol.com.

Go Online.

Are you on America Online? As an NEA member, you can also be part of NEA Online. Visit NEAOL's *Affiliates and Constituencies* area and read excerpts from the ESP Data Book, find ideas about fighting privatization, get examples of model ESP contract language, and post a message on the message board about your experiences with contracting out. For a free NEA Online starter kit, call (800) 781-5577 and identify yourself as an NEA member.

Surf the Web.

Educational support personnel in cyberspace? You bet! Visit NEA's ESP home page at *http:/www.nea.org/esp* and learn about this diverse and skilled group of educational employees, who make a difference in students' lives and in public education every day. We are educators, community leaders, and committed union members. We'll see you there.

And Make the ESP Connection.

For more information about the ESP Information System, contact:

Roxanne Dove
ESP Program Coordinator
National Education Association
1201 16th St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
E-mail: rdove@nea.org

nea
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

The Organized Here's Wh

- **Name:** Flora (Flo) Capps
- **NEA local affiliate, state:** Baltimore County Instructional Assistants and Clerical Employees, Inc., Maryland
- **Years of service:** 19
- **Current pay:** $29,000, 37.5 hours per week for 12 months
- **Most recent major purchase:** A '96 Grand Marquis.
- **Biggest financial worry:** My newborn grandson's college education. By the time he's grown, the cost of college could go through the roof.
- **Best part of the job:** The hours are good, and I enjoy the time off we get for vacations plus winter and spring holidays.
- **Part of the job I'd change if I could:** The paperwork—there's too much of it. We've managed over the years to dwindle it, but it's still a lot.
- **Dream job:** Social work. I'm big on women's issues, and I'd like to work on spouse abuse and child abuse. I'm an ex-police officer, and I like the investigative side.
- **Best reason for joining NEA:** All the perks. I save $400 a year on car insurance, and I appreciate the liability coverage, the credit card, and the new long-term health care insurance. At my age, I'm beginning to think about those things.

Accounting/Payroll Clerks

National Average Salary, 1996-97	$25,881
National Average Salary, 1995-96	$25,009
Percent Salary Increase	3.5%

Pay by Size of Student Enrollment

300 to 2,499	$26,012
2,500 to 9,999	$26,738
10,000 to 24,999	$25,175
25,000 or more	$24,462

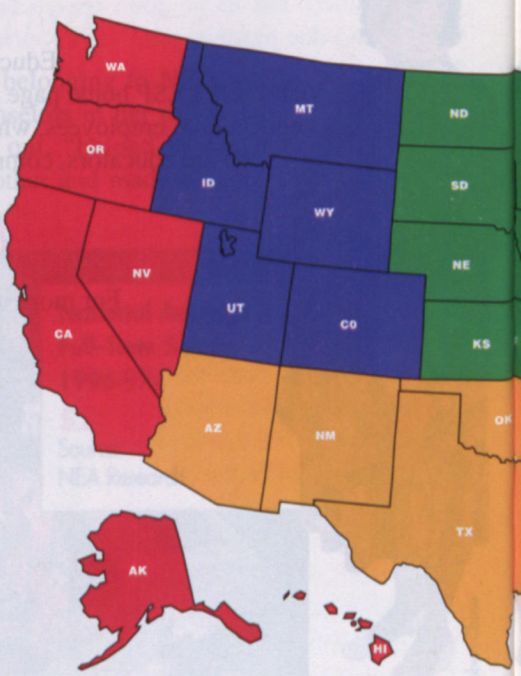
Pay by Per Pupil Expenditure

Less than $4,500	$24,347
$4,500 to $4,999	$25,104
$5,000 to $5,999	$25,100
$6,000 to $6,999	$25,707
$7,000 or more	$28,311

Pay by Geographic Region

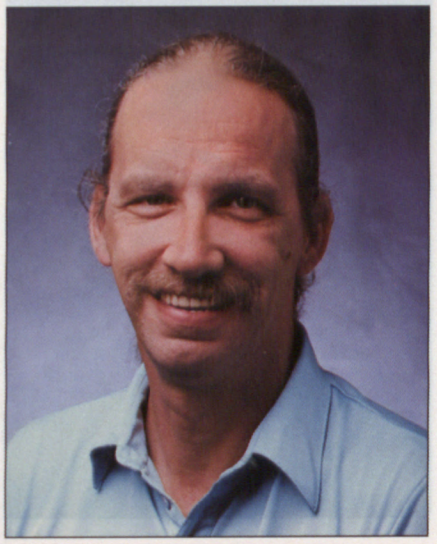
New England	$27,609
Mideast	$27,896
Southeast	$24,611
Great Lakes	$26,930
Plains	$23,664
Southwest	$21,105
Rocky Mountains	$22,605
Far West	$28,041

All figures taken from the *National Survey of Salaries and Wages in Public Schools, Part 3, Wages and Salaries Paid Support Personnel in Public Schools, 1996-97.* © 1997 by Educational Research Service. Hourly wage rates and salaries presented as national averages reflect nonweighted averages of the approximately 1,000 districts that provide data reported to ERS. Appreciation is expressed to ERS for use of these data.

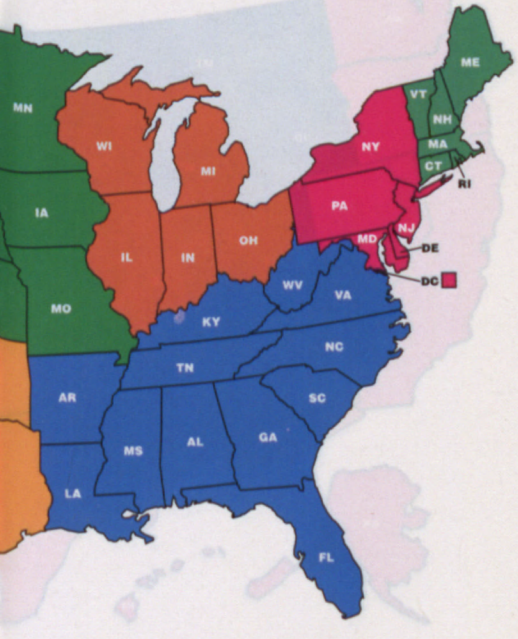


Photographs on pages 46-55 by Paul Body

hat We Earn



- **Name:** Dale Blake
- **NEA local affiliate, state:** Nye County Support Staff Organization, Nevada
- **Years of service:** 8
- **Current pay:** $12.99 an hour, 30 hours a week for 9 months
- **Most recent major purchase:** Parts for my IBM compatible computer.
- **Biggest financial worry:** Transportation. I'm in the process of finding a car that can withstand the amount of miles I have to drive in the course of my day.
- **Best part of the job:** I love the kids. Many times I'm the first adult these children see in the morning and the last one they see at night. For me, it's like having a family away from my family.
- **Part of the job I'd change if I could:** I would correct the flaws in the way our transportation system operates.
- **Dream job:** I get so much satisfaction from helping people that my dream job would simply allow me to point people in the right direction. I want to have a positive impact on all the people around me.
- **Best reason for joining NEA:** The job security may be the biggest reason, but I enjoy the chance NEA gives me to meet people from all over the United States, who, in many instances, have the same problems we have here in Nevada.



Bus Drivers

National Average Hourly Wage, 1996-97	$11.50
National Average Hourly Wage, 1995-96	$11.04
Percent Salary Increase	4.2%

Pay by Size of Student Enrollment

300 to 2,499	$11.27
2,500 to 9,999	$11.82
10,000 to 24,999	$11.48
25,000 or more	$11.16

Pay by Per Pupil Expenditure

Less than $4,500	$10.99
$4,500 to $4,999	$11.27
$5,000 to $5,999	$10.94
$6,000 to $6,999	$11.00
$7,000 or more	$13.33

Pay by Geographic Region

New England	$10.73
Mideast	$13.53
Southeast	$10.29
Great Lakes	$12.53
Plains	$10.28
Southwest	$9.48
Rocky Mountains	$10.13
Far West	$12.59

All figures taken from the *National Survey of Salaries and Wages in Public Schools, Part 3, Wages and Salaries Paid Support Personnel in Public Schools, 1996-97.* © 1997 by Educational Research Service. Hourly wage rates and salaries presented as national averages reflect nonweighted averages of the approximately 1,000 districts that provide data reported to ERS. Appreciation is expressed to ERS for use of these data.

The Organized Here's Wh

- **Name:** Cecelia Thoma
- **NEA local affiliate, state:** Ventura Classified Employees Association, California
- **Years of service:** 8, when you add them up
- **Current pay:** $8.78 an hour, 20 hours a week for 10 months
- **Most recent major purchase:** A stereo.
- **Biggest financial worry:** Retirement. I just want to be comfortable and maintain my current lifestyle throughout my life.
- **Best part of the job:** The camaraderie with my co-workers. We're working toward the same goal every day—getting those children fed.
- **Part of the job I'd change if I could:** Our wages. Food service management jobs—filled mostly by women—top out at what other support jobs—filled mostly by men—start at. We bring money in, deal with vendors and contractors, take care of bank deposits, and work as a team. We deserve pay equity.
- **Dream job:** I'd like to run a nice bed-and-breakfast with a view.
- **Best reason for joining NEA:** For your protection, your rights. You work hard, and NEA is protecting you, supporting you, and keeping you informed.

Cafeteria Workers

National Average Hourly Wage, 1996-97	$8.30
National Average Hourly Wage, 1995-96	$8.15
Percent Salary Increase	1.8%

Pay by Size of Student Enrollment

300 to 2,499	$7.78
2,500 to 9,999	$8.53
10,000 to 24,999	$8.35
25,000 or more	$8.40

Pay by Per Pupil Expenditure

Less than $4,500	$8.00
$4,500 to $4,999	$8.02
$5,000 to $5,999	$8.14
$6,000 to $6,999	$8.43
$7,000 or more	$8.85

Pay by Geographic Region

New England	$8.96
Mideast	$8.76
Southeast	$7.71
Great Lakes	$8.53
Plains	$7.57
Southwest	$7.24
Rocky Mountains	$7.70
Far West	$9.28

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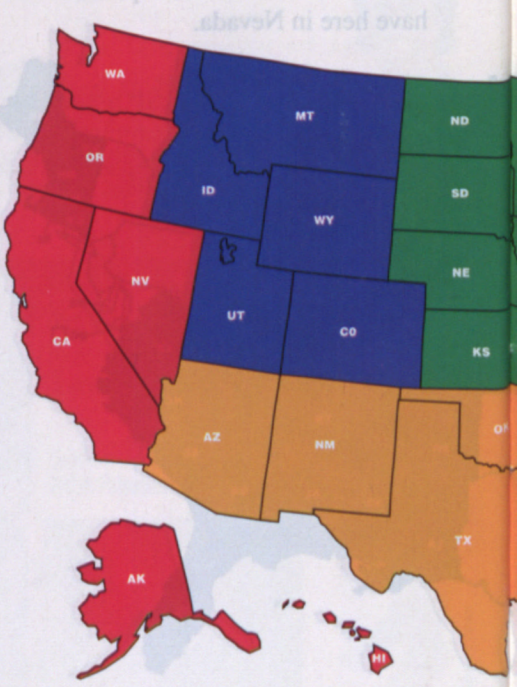
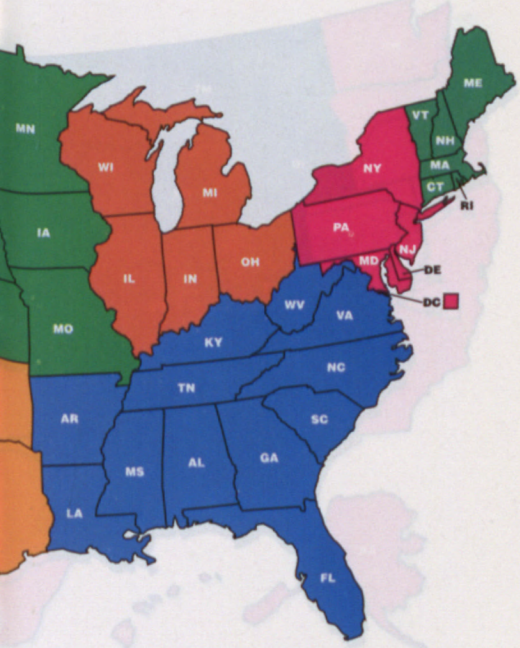


hat We Earn

- **Name:** Sharon Cartner
- **NEA local affiliate, state:** Fairbanks Educational Support Staff Association, Alaska
- **Years of service:** 16
- **Current pay:** $17.27 an hour, 37.5 hours a week for 10 months
- **Most recent major purchase:** A second-hand Dodge 4x4 diesel truck.
- **Biggest financial worry:** Making sure that I have enough money to retire and enjoy life a little bit. I'm trying to get the best job possible for my last three years of credit toward retirement.
- **Best part of the job:** The variety and working with people. It's amazing the kind of different things that come up every day. I like to set up and try new things—this job gives me an opportunity to do that.
- **Part of the job I'd change if I could:** Order would be nice. We've got so many kids and so much paperwork—it's so hectic.
- **Dream job:** If I was to go back and do it again, I'd get a degree in business management. It might be fun to teach business at the high school level, or even run a business.
- **Best reason for joining NEA:** NEA is a people organization, and people are always happy to help.



Central Office Secretaries

National Average Salary, 1996-97	$25,709
National Average Salary, 1995-96	$24,809
Percent Salary Increase	3.6%

Pay by Size of Student Enrollment

300 to 2,499	$25,144
2,500 to 9,999	$26,395
10,000 to 24,999	$25,070
25,000 or more	$25,883

Pay by Per Pupil Expenditure

Less than $4,500	$24,477
$4,500 to $4,999	$24,618
$5,000 to $5,999	$24,369
$6,000 to $6,999	$25,444
$7,000 or more	$28,916

Pay by Geographic Region

New England	$28,392
Mideast	$28,455
Southeast	$22,779
Great Lakes	$26,071
Plains	$22,621
Southwest	$21,853
Rocky Mountains	$22,219
Far West	$29,428

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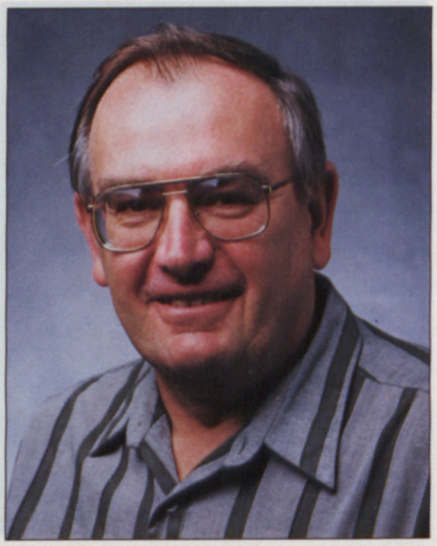
The Organized Here's Wh



- **Name:** Charles Volker
- **NEA local affiliate, state:** Fieldcrest Education Association, Illinois
- **Years of service:** 10
- **Current pay:** $13.65 an hour, 40 hours a week for 12 months
- **Most recent major purchase:** A house for rental purposes.
- **Biggest financial worry:** Not having a large enough nest egg to retire on. I want to retire within the next 10 years, and to make that happen, I own two homes and invest.
- **Best part of the job:** I enjoy working with the administration, other employees, and the kids. If you can't work around kids, then you're in the wrong profession.
- **Part of the job I'd change if I could:** I'd like to have more control over the decision-making process. I want to be able to decide how the maintenance work is performed.
- **Dream job:** I've always wanted to work maintenance in a motel. I think this would be exciting because you have the opportunity to meet a wide range of people from diverse backgrounds.
- **Best reason for joining NEA:** You have a lot of support—not only from your local, but from your state affiliate. In effect, you have the support of thousands of people.

Custodians

National Average Hourly Wage, 1996-97	$10.65
National Average Hourly Wage, 1995-96	$10.35
Percent Salary Increase	2.9%

Pay by Size of Student Enrollment

300 to 2,499	$10.26
2,500 to 9,999	$11.26
10,000 to 24,999	$10.52
25,000 or more	$9.93

Pay by Per Pupil Expenditure

Less than $4,500	$9.65
$4,500 to $4,999	$9.79
$5,000 to $5,999	$10.07
$6,000 to $6,999	$10.87
$7,000 or more	$12.46

Pay by Geographic Region

New England	$12.35
Mideast	$11.88
Southeast	$8.23
Great Lakes	$12.01
Plains	$9.66
Southwest	$7.89
Rocky Mountains	$9.43
Far West	$11.95

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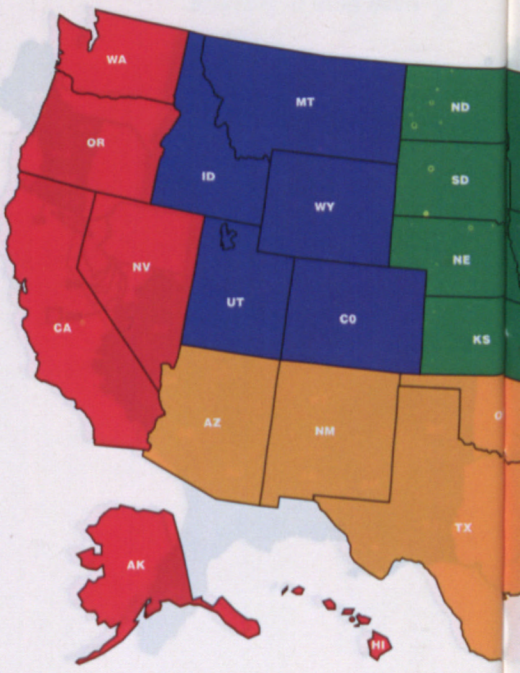
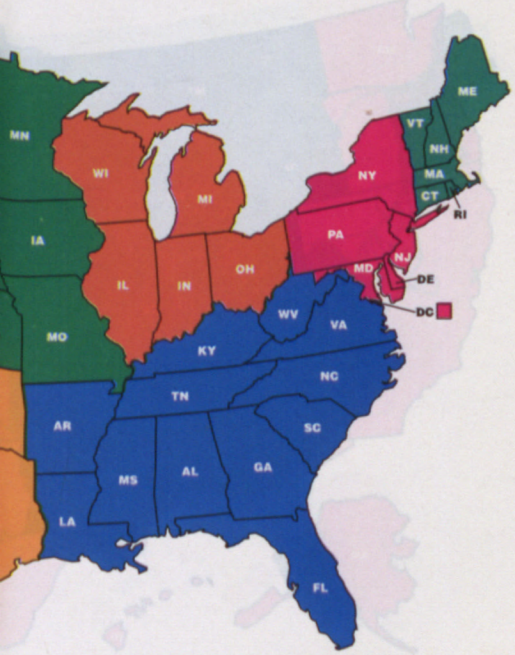


hat We Earn

- **Name:** Jimmie Myers
- **NEA local affiliate, state:** Kilgore TSTA, Texas
- **Years of service:** 18
- **Current pay:** $8.55 an hour, 40 hours a week for 11 months
- **Most recent major purchase:** I haven't bought a car since 1994, and my home and land are paid for. So I haven't made major purchases recently.
- **Biggest financial worry:** If I were a single parent, I couldn't make ends meet.
- **Best part of the job:** I love working with the teachers and the students. I work at the alternative high school, and I put my arm around the kids here, and tell them they're worth something. I never give up on them.
- **Part of the job I'd change if I could:** I'm perfectly happy in the situation I'm in. The salary would be the only thing I'd change.
- **Dream job:** I'd take in all the homeless children and give them a place to stay and good meals every day and a good place to sleep at night.
- **Best reason for joining NEA:** NEA is the only organization that offers me the chance to have a strong national voice in education. NEA is there for the benefit of the employees and the students.



Instructional Assistants

National Average Hourly Wage, 1996-97	$9.25
National Average Hourly Wage, 1995-96	$9.04
Percent Salary Increase	2.3%

Pay by Size of Student Enrollment

300 to 2,499	$8.75
2,500 to 9,999	$9.21
10,000 to 24,999	$9.45
25,000 or more	$9.68

Pay by Per Pupil Expenditure

Less than $4,500	$8.59
$4,500 to $4,999	$8.98
$5,000 to $5,999	$8.94
$6,000 to $6,999	$9.35
$7,000 or more	$10.24

Pay by Geographic Region

New England	$9.42
Mideast	$10.07
Southeast	$8.70
Great Lakes	$9.36
Plains	$8.31
Southwest	$8.48
Rocky Mountains	$7.61
Far West	$10.19

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The Organized | Here's Wh

- **Name:** Nancy Peters
- **NEA local affiliate, state:** Lake Forest Education Association, Delaware
- **Years of service:** 11
- **Current pay:** $11,000, 7 hours a day for 9 months
- **Most recent major purchase:** My husband, my son, and I are building a ranch house on what's probably the only hill in Delaware.
- **Biggest financial worry:** Paying my son's college tuition. He's 17 and starts September 3 at the University of Delaware.
- **Best part of the job:** I like to teach library skills and see the students get it, see that light turn on. The next best part is when they get older and come back and say, "I really did like library," or when they tell the high school librarian that "Mrs. Peters taught me to do that."
- **Part of the job I'd change if I could:** The size of my library. It's very small. My biggest class is 33 kids in fifth grade. When every student in that class is in here, we can hardly move.
- **Dream job:** I'm doing it. I wouldn't leave here for anything, not for anything.
- **Best reason for joining NEA:** The benefits and the protection that I feel. I like the whole package. I feel a security from knowing I'm a part of NEA, and that there's somebody looking out for me.

Library Clerks

National Average Salary, 1996-97	$15,349
National Average Salary, 1995-96	$14,791
Percent Salary Increase	3.8%

Pay by Size of Student Enrollment

300 to 2,499	$13,691
2,500 to 9,999	$15,405
10,000 to 24,999	$15,959
25,000 or more	$16,418

Pay by Per Pupil Expenditure

Less than $4,500	$14,193
$4,500 to $4,999	$15,763
$5,000 to $5,999	$13,783
$6,000 to $6,999	$15,831
$7,000 or more	$17,577

Pay by Geographic Region

New England	$15,054
Mideast	$17,626
Southeast	$13,510
Great Lakes	$14,624
Plains	$13,506
Southwest	$12,649
Rocky Mountains	$11,355
Far West	$19,684

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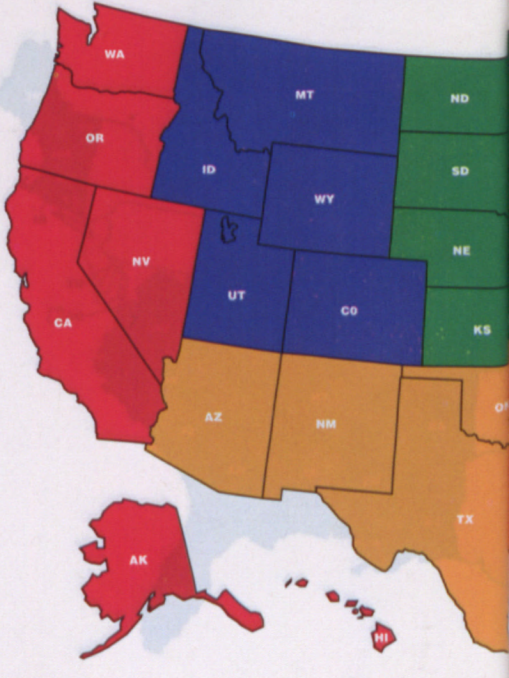
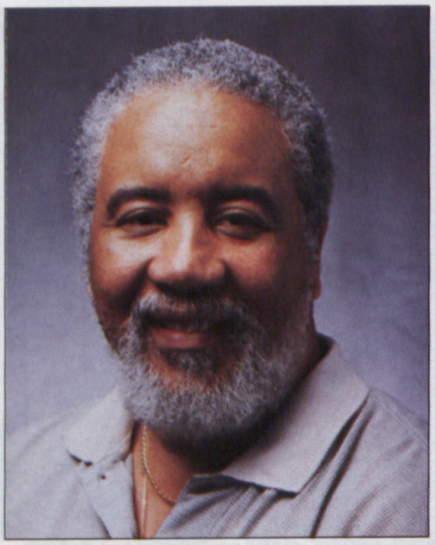
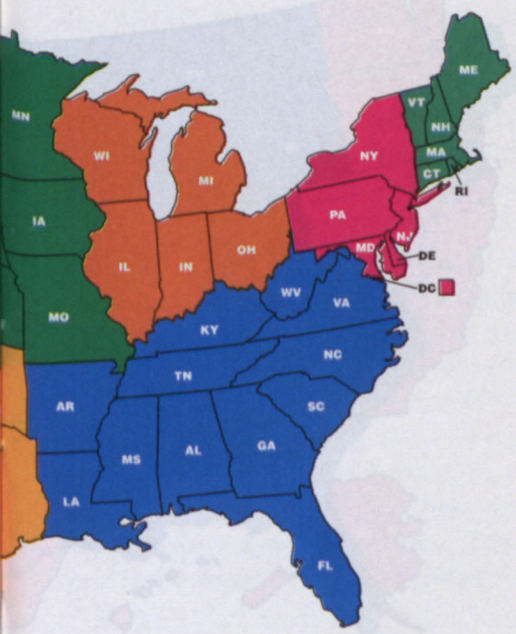


at We Earn



- **Name:** Joseph Ramos
- **NEA local affiliate, state:** Spokane Education Association, Washington
- **Years of service:** 5
- **Current pay:** $9.48 an hour, 25 hours a week for 10 months
- **Most recent major purchase:** A computer.
- **Biggest financial worry:** Being able to pay for my six-year-old adopted grandson's college tuition.
- **Best part of the job:** I help teach driver's ed. Many kids come into the driving course not knowing a thing about cars. Seeing them go from non-drivers to fairly competent drivers—at ease with the driving process—is really fantastic and refreshing to watch.
- **Part of the job I'd change if I could:** If I could, I'd make everyone take driver's training.
- **Dream job:** Traffic safety is a great job because it's very rewarding. We teach the children not to use drugs, not to drink and drive, and how to be responsible.
- **Best reason for joining NEA:** NEA's 2.3 million members drive the organization, and NEA is always sensitive to member concerns.



Noninstructional Assistants

National Average Hourly Wage, 1996-97	$8.88
National Average Hourly Wage, 1995-96	$8.52
Percent Salary Increase	4.2%

Pay by Size of Student Enrollment

300 to 2,499	$8.53
2,500 to 9,999	$8.95
10,000 to 24,999	$9.08
25,000 or more	$9.00

Pay by Per Pupil Expenditure

Less than $4,500	$8.18
$4,500 to $4,999	$8.63
$5,000 to $5,999	$8.54
$6,000 to $6,999	$8.97
$7,000 or more	$9.56

Pay by Geographic Region

New England	$9.44
Mideast	$9.26
Southeast	$8.75
Great Lakes	$9.16
Plains	$8.11
Southwest	$7.93
Rocky Mountains	$7.49
Far West	$9.68

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The Organized

Here's Wh

- **Name:** Debra Hollis
- **NEA local affiliate, state:** Birmingham City Education Support Personnel Organization, Alabama
- **Years of service:** 21
- **Current pay:** $28,200, 40 hours a week for 12 months
- **Most recent major purchase:** I've done some major repairs in my home—carpeting, new roof, and painting.
- **Biggest financial worry:** Health care. I would hate to be unemployed, because we all need health benefits.
- **Best part of the job:** I like what I do. I handle a lot of computer work for the school system and the payroll. I work with students in the office and often give them recommendations for clerical jobs.
- **Part of the job I'd change if I could:** I like the year-round employment, but if I could change it, I would certainly increase my salary.
- **Dream job:** An administrative position where I would be benefiting the education system. And I'd love to be on the board of education because of my awareness of public school needs.
- **Best reason for joining NEA:** Job protection is my main concern. I wouldn't risk being employed in the education system without being a member of NEA.

School Building Secretaries

National Average Salary, 1996-97	$20,709
National Average Salary, 1995-96	$20,076
Percent Salary Increase	3.2%

Pay by Size of Student Enrollment

300 to 2,499	$18,863
2,500 to 9,999	$20,938
10,000 to 24,999	$21,174
25,000 or more	$22,138

Pay by Per Pupil Expenditure

Less than $4,500	$19,351
$4,500 to $4,999	$20,774
$5,000 to $5,999	$19,780
$6,000 to $6,999	$20,224
$7,000 or more	$23,049

Pay by Geographic Region

New England	$22,259
Mideast	$22,984
Southeast	$19,141
Great Lakes	$19,481
Plains	$17,714
Southwest	$18,921
Rocky Mountains	$17,058
Far West	$24,419

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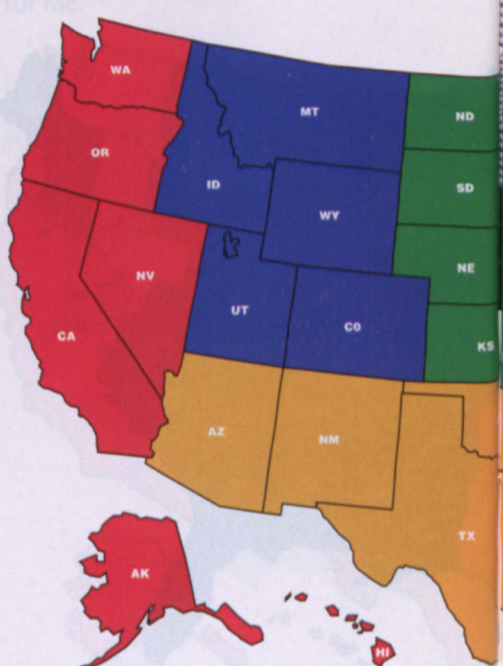
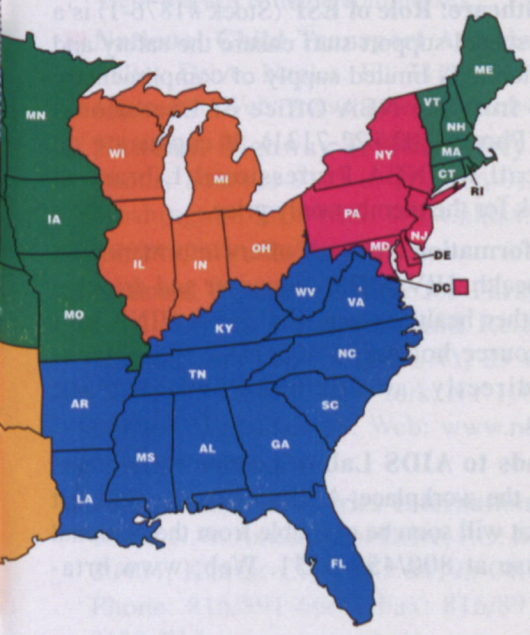


hat We Earn

- **Name:** Antonette Cummings
- **NEA local affiliate, state:** Camden Education Association, New Jersey
- **Years of service:** 20
- **Current pay:** $31,000, 37.5 hours a week for 12 months
- **Most recent major purchase:** A used '93 Mercury Topaz.
- **Biggest financial worry:** My children are 24 and 26, but I still worry whether they're going to be alright.
- **Best part of the job:** Interaction with people. I'm a clerk in the special services division of special education. I primarily take care of instructional assistants' time cards and keep a running account of preschool for the handicapped moneys. As a union rep, I can steer employees with problems in the right direction.
- **Part of the job I'd change if I could:** Communication with other employees in the buildings. People just don't understand what other people's jobs are. If I had a little more cooperation getting time cards in a timely manner, my job would be a lot easier.
- **Dream job:** I like people. It doesn't matter what the job is as long as I'm helping people.
- **Best reason for joining NEA:** There is strength in unity.



Typists/Data Entry Clerks

National Average Salary, 1996-97	$20,726
National Average Salary, 1995-96	$19,447
Percent Salary Increase	6.6%

Pay by Size of Student Enrollment

300 to 2,499	$19,743
2,500 to 9,999	$21,365
10,000 to 24,999	$20,356
25,000 or more	$20,574

Pay by Per Pupil Expenditure

Less than $4,500	$19,298
$4,500 to $4,999	$20,900
$5,000 to $5,999	$19,784
$6,000 to $6,999	$19,599
$7,000 or more	$23,110

Pay by Geographic Region

New England	$23,949
Mideast	$22,883
Southeast	$19,231
Great Lakes	$19,934
Plains	$18,846
Southwest	$17,234
Rocky Mountains	$18,182
Far West	$22,592

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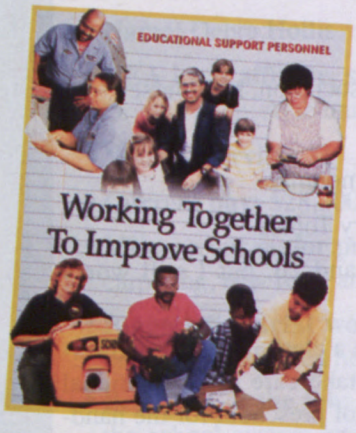
Resources

Quality Education



- **Working Together to Improve Schools** is a guide for making support staff part of the educational reform team. This NEA report cites the vital role ESP play in creating the best quality learning centers for children. To obtain a copy of the report, contact the Office of Educational Support Personnel, NEA, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036.
- The 1997 **NEA Professional Library Catalog** offers resources for school staff working to create high-quality learning environments. Topics include school improvement resources, social issues, and learning styles. To order a free copy of the catalog, call 800/229-4200 or fax a request (24 hours a day) to 203/933-5276.

Privatization

- The NEA manual **Contracting Out: Strategies for Fighting Back** (stock #1879-6) offers advice on fighting subcontracting, facts on privatization, and preventative tips. To order, call the NEA Professional Library at 800/229-4200. Price: $2.95 for members, $9.95 for non-members. A shipping and handling charge will be added to each order.
- **Company Research on the World Wide Web: A Subject Guide for Union Activists** is a new Web page from the AFSCME Information Center that contains useful tips on and links to sites about privatization. It's a good starting point for research on firms engaged in all aspects of public school contracting. Point your Web browser to: www.afscme.org/afscme/wrkplace/corprsch.htm.
- **NEA Online's** *ESP and Contracting Out* area (keyword: NEA) provides tips on combating subcontracting, corporate profiles of contractors, and sample union contract language on privatization. For a free NEA Online starter kit, call 800/781-5577.
- NEA's **Center for the Advancement of Public Education** devises strategies to counter the forces that undermine public education and helps implement those strategies. Contact your NEA Regional Office for information or assistance from the Center.
- The **AFL-CIO Public Employee Department** has formed a privatization committee and publishes a privatization manual. For copies of the manual and a newsletter, write PED, AFL-CIO, 815 16th Street, N.W., Room 303, Washington, DC 20006.

Health and Safety

- **The Healthy School Handbook: Conquering the Sick Building Syndrome and Other Environmental Hazards In and Around Your School** (stock number 1863-X-20-C8). Special member price: $21.95, plus s&h. To order, call the NEA Professional Library at 800/229-4200.
- The **Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Kit**, produced by the Environmental Protection Agency and co-sponsored by NEA, can help you diagnose indoor air problems. To order, call 202/512-1800, fax 202/512-2250, or send a check for $22 to the Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250. Make checks payable to Superintendent of Documents. For EPA's **Indoor Air Quality Basics for Schools** fact sheet and more, contact the **IAQ Clearinghouse** at 800/438-4318.
- **Providing Safe Healthcare: Role of ESP** (Stock #1876-1) is a handbook that helps school support staff ensure the safety and well-being of all children. A limited supply of complimentary copies is available from the NEA Office of Educational Support Personnel (Phone: 202/822-7131). If copies are no longer available, call the NEA Professional Library at 800/229-4200 and ask for the member-only price.
- The **NEA Health Information Network** offers information on breast and cervical health, HIV/AIDS, indoor air and drinking water quality, and other health issues. Call NEA HIN's toll-free voice mail resource hotline at 800/718-8387 or contact NEA HIN directly at 202/822-7570. E-mail: NEAHIN1@aol.com.
- The **Labor Responds to AIDS Labor Leader's Kit** deals with AIDS issues in the workplace. A new, revised edition of this comprehensive kit will soon be available from the National AIDS Clearinghouse at 800/458-5231. Web: www.brta-lrta.org.

for Support Staff

Professional Connections

- **American School Food Service Association,** 1600 Duke St., 7th floor, Alexandria, VA 22314-3436. Phone: 703/739-3900. Fax: 703/739-3915. E-mail: webmaster@asfsa.org. Web: www.asfsa.org.
- **Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development,** 1250 North Pitt Street, Alexandria VA 22314. Phone: 703/549-9110 or toll-free at 800/933-ASCD (2723). Fax: 703/299-8631. Web: www.ascd.org.
- **College and University Personnel Association,** 1233 20th Street, N.W., Suite 301, Washington DC 20036-1250. Phone: 202/429-0311. Fax: 202/429-0149. Web: www.cupa.org/.
- **Council for Basic Education,** 1319 F Street, N.W. Suite 900, Washington, DC 20004-1152. Phone: 202/347-4171. Fax: 202/347-5047. E-mail: info@c-b-e.org. Web: www.c-b-e.org.
- **National Association of Educational Office Professionals,** P.O. Box 12619, Wichita, KS 67277-2619. Phone: 316/942-4822. Fax: 316/942-7100. Web: www.schs.wash.k12.ut.us/~naeop/.
- **National Association of Pupil Transportation,** 120 Washington Avenue, Albany, New York 12210. Phone: 800/989-NAPT. E-mail: info@napt.org. Web: www.napt.org.
- **National Association of School Nurses,** P.O. Box 1300, Scarborough, Maine 04070-1300. Phone: 207/883-2117. Web: www.VRmedia.com/nurses.
- **National Child Transport Association,** 381 Hidden Valley Drive, Naples, FL 34113-7126. E-mail: hms@naples.net. Web: www.naples.net/clubs/ncta.
- **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.** Phone: 800/424-9393 or 202/366-0123 in Washington, DC. Web: www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/buses/.
- **National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Human Services,** CASE/CUNY, 25 West 43rd St., Suite 620, New York, NY 10036. Phone: 212/642-2948. Web: www.nea.org/esp/nrcpara.htm.
- **Professional Secretaries International,** 10502 N.W. Ambassador Drive, P.O. Box 20404, Kansas City, MO 64195-0404. Phone: 816/891-6600. Fax: 816/891-9118. Web: www.gvi.net/psi/.

- **Recruiting New Teachers,** 385 Concord Avenue, Suite 103, Belmont, MA 02178. Phone: (617) 489-6000. Web: www.rnt.org.
- **School Transportation News.** Web: www.stnonline.com/ORGANIZATION.HTM.

Professional Tools

- **The Education and Training Resources Catalogue** from Professional Secretaries International offers educational products geared to professional and personal development of secretaries and office support staff. To order, send $1.50 for shipping/handling per catalogue to: Professional Secretaries International, P.O. Box 20404, Kansas City, MO 64195-0404.
- **Appropriate Inclusion & Paraprofessionals: Changing Roles and Expectations** is a resource for paraprofessionals in schools that practice appropriate inclusion. Learn how to adapt to changing roles and adopt strategies that will help you help others. Call your NEA local affiliate for a copy.
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